INTERPRETERS

by

CARL
VAN VECHTEN

Interpreters

BOOKS BY CARL VAN VECHTEN

INTERPRETERS

IN THE GARRET

THE MUSIC OF SPAIN

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

MUSIC AND BAD MANNERS

THE TIGER IN THE HOUSE

MUSIC AFTER THE GREAT WAR

MARY GARDEN AS CHÉRUBIN (1905)

Interpreters

Carl Van Vechten

A new edition, revised, with sixteen illustrations and an epilogue

New York Alfred · A · Knopf
MCMXX

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

the unforgettable interpreter of Ariel,
Zelima, Louka, Wendla,
and Columbine,

Fania Marinoff, my wife

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Olive Fremstad

C'est que le Beau est la seule chose qui soit immortelle, et qu'aussi longtemps qu'il reste un vestige de sa manifestation matérielle, son immortalité subsiste. Le Beau est répandu partout, il s'étend même jusque sur la mort. Mais il ne rayonne nulle part avec autant d'intensité que dans l'individualité humaine; c'est là qu'il parle le plus à l'intelligence, et c'est pour cela que, pour ma part, je préférerai toujours une grande puissance musicale servie par une voix défectueuse, à une voix belle et bête, une voix dont la beauté n'est que matérielle."

Ivan Turgeniev to Mme. Viardot.

Olive Fremstad

THE career of Olive Fremstad has entailed continuous struggle: a struggle in the beginning with poverty, a struggle with a refractory voice, and a struggle with her own overpowering and dominating temperament. Ambition has steered her course. After she had made a notable name for herself through her interpretations of contralto rôles, she determined to sing soprano parts, and did so, largely by an effort of will. She is always dissatisfied with her characterizations; she is always studying ways and means of improving them. It is not easy for her to mould a figure; it is, on the contrary, very difficult. One would suppose that her magnetism and force would carry her through an opera without any great amount of preparation. Such is not the case. There is no other singer before the public so little at her ease in any impromptu performance. Recently, when she returned to the New York stage with an itinerant opera company to sing in an ill-rehearsed performance of *Tosca*, she all but lost her grip. She was not herself and she did not convince. New costumes, which hindered her movements, and a Scarpia with whom she was unfamiliar, were responsible in a measure

for her failure to assume her customary authority.

If you have seen and heard Olive Fremstad in the scene of the spear in *Götterdämmerung*, you will find it difficult to believe that what I say is true, that work and not plenary inspiration is responsible for the effect. To be sure, the inspiration has its place in the final result. Once she is certain of her ground, words, music, tone-colour, gesture, and action, she inflames the whole magnificently with her magnetism. This magnetism is instinctive, a part of herself; the rest is not. She brings about the detail with diligent drudgery, and without that her performances would go for nought. The singer pays for this intense concentration. In "Tower of Ivory" Mrs. Atherton says that all Wagnerian singers must pay heavily. Probably all good ones must. Charles Henry Melzer has related somewhere that he first saw Mme. Fremstad on the stage at Covent Garden, where between her scenes in some Wagner music drama, lost in her rôle, utterly oblivious of stage hands or fellow-artists, she paced up and down in the wings. At the moment he decided that she was a great interpretative artist, and he had never heard her sing. When she is singing a rôle she will not allow herself to be interrupted; she holds no receptions between scenes.

"Come back after the opera," she says to her friends, and frequently then she is too tired to see any one. She often drives home alone, a prey to quivering nerves which keep her eyeballs rolling in ceaseless torture — sleepless.

Nothing about the preparation of an opera is easy for Olive Fremstad; the thought, the idea, does not register immediately in her brain. But once she has achieved complete understanding of a rôle and thoroughly mastered its music, the fire of her personality enables her easily to set a standard. Is there another singer who can stand on the same heights with Mme. Fremstad as Isolde, Venus, Elsa, Sieglinde, Kundry, Armide, Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*, or Salome? And are not these the most difficult and trying rôles in the répertoire of the lyric stage to-day?

In one of her impatient moods — and they occur frequently — the singer once complained of this fact. "How easy it is," she said, "for those who make their successes as Marguerite and Mimi. . . . I should like to sing those rôles. . . ." But the remark was made under a misconception of her own personality. Mme. Fremstad would find Mimi and Marguerite much more difficult to compass than Isolde and Kundry. She is by nature Northern and heroic, and her physique is suited

to the goddesses and heroines of the Norse myths (it is a significant fact that she has never attempted to sing Eva or Senta). Occasionally, as in Salome, she has been able to exploit successfully another side of her talent, but in the rendering of the grand, the noble, and the heroic, she has no equal on our stage. Yet her Tosca always lacked nobility. There was something in the music which never brought the quality out.

In such a part as Selika she seemed lost (wasted, too, it may be added), although the entrance of the proud African girl was made with some effect, and the death scene was carried through with beauty of purpose. But has any one ever characterized Selika? Her Santuzza, one of the two rôles which she has sung in Paris, must be considered a failure when judged by the side of such a performance as that given by Emma Calvé — and who would judge Olive Fremstad by any but the highest standards? The Swedish singer's Santuzza was as elemental, in its way, as that of the Frenchwoman, but its implications were too tragic, too massive in their noble beauty, for the correct interpretation of a sordid melodrama. It was as though some one had engaged the Victory of Samothrace to enact the part. Munich adored the Fremstad Carmen (was it not

her characterization of the Bizet heroine which caused Heinrich Conried to engage her for America?) and Franz von Stuck painted her twice in the rôle. Even in New York she was appreciated in the part. The critics awarded her fervent adulation, but she never stirred the public pulse. The principal fault of this very Northern Carmen was her lack of humour, a quality the singer herself is deficient in. For a season or two in America Mme. Fremstad appeared in the rôle, singing it, indeed, in San Francisco the night of the memorable earthquake, and then it disappeared from her répertoire. Maria Gay was the next Metropolitan Carmen, but it was Geraldine Farrar who made the opera again as popular as it had been in Emma Calvé's day.

Mme. Fremstad is one of those rare singers on the lyric stage who is able to suggest the meaning of the dramatic situation through the colour of her voice. This tone-colour she achieves stroke by stroke, devoting many days to the study of important phrases. To go over in detail the instances in which she has developed effects through the use of tone-colour would make it necessary to review, note by note, the operas in which she has appeared. I have no such intention. It may be sufficient to recall to the reader — who,

in remembering, may recapture the thrill — the effect she produces with the poignant lines beginning *Amour, puissant amour* at the close of the third act of *Armide*, the dull, spent quality of the voice emitted over the words *Ich habe deinen Mund geküsst* from the final scene of *Salome*, and the subtle, dreamy rapture of the *Liebestod* in *Tristan und Isolde*. Has any one else achieved this effect? She once told me that Titian's Assumption of the Virgin was her inspiration for her conception of this scene.

Luscious in quality, Mme. Fremstad's voice is not altogether a tractable organ, but she has forced it to do her bidding. A critic long ago pointed out that another singer would not be likely to emerge with credit through the use of Mme. Fremstad's vocal method. It is full of expediences. Oftener than most singers, too, she has been in "bad voice." And her difficulties have been increased by her determination to become a soprano, difficulties she has surmounted brilliantly. In other periods we learn that singers did not limit their ranges by the quality of their voices. In our day singers have specialized in high or low rôles. Many contraltos, however, have chafed under the restrictions which composers have compelled them to accept. Almost

all of them have attempted now and again to sing soprano rôles. Only in the case of Edyth Walker, however, do we find an analogy to the case of Olive Fremstad. Both of these singers have attained high artistic ideals in both ranges. Magnificent as Brangaene, Amneris, and Ortrud, the Swedish singer later presented unrivalled characterizations of Isolde, Armide, and Brünnhilde.

The high tessitura of the music allotted to the *Siegfried* Brünnhilde is a strain for most singers. Mme. Nordica once declared that this Brünnhilde was the most difficult of the three. Without having sung a note in the early evening, she must awake in the third act, about ten-thirty or eleven, to begin almost immediately the melismatic duet which concludes the music drama. Mme. Fremstad, by the use of many expediences, such as pronouncing Siegfried as if it were spelled Seigfried when the first syllable fell on a high note, was able to get through with this part without projecting a sense of effort, unless it was on the high C at the conclusion, a note of which she frequently allowed the tenor to remain in undisputed possession. But the fierce joy and spirited abandon she put into the acting of the rôle, the passion with which she infused her singing, carried her victoriously past the dangerous places, often more

victoriously than some other singer, who could produce high notes more easily, but whose stage resources were more limited.

I do not think Mme. Fremstad has trained her voice to any high degree of agility. She can sing the drinking song from *Lucrezia Borgia* and Delibes's *Les Filles de Cadix* with irresistible effect, a good part of which, however, is produced by her personality and manner, qualities which carry her far on the concert stage, although for some esoteric reason they have never inveigled the general public into an enthusiastic surrender to her charm. I have often heard her sing Swedish songs in her native tongue (sometimes to her own accompaniment) so enchantingly, with such appeal in her manner, and such velvet tones in her voice, that those who heard her with me not only burst into applause but also into exclamations of surprise and delight. Nevertheless, in her concerts, or in opera, although her admirers are perhaps stronger in their loyalty than those of any other singer, she has never possessed the greatest drawing power. This is one of the secrets of the stage; it cannot be solved. It would seem that the art of Mme. Fremstad was more homely, more human in song, grander and more noble in opera, than that of Mme. Tetrazzini, but the public as a

OLIVE FREMSTAD AS ELSA

from a photograph by Mishkin (1913)

whole prefers to hear the latter, just as it has gone in larger numbers to see the acting of Miss Garden or Mme. Farrar. Why this is so I cannot pretend to explain.

Mme. Fremstad has appeared in pretty nearly all of the important, and many of the lesser, Wagner rôles. She has never sung Senta, and she once told me that she had no desire to do so, nor has she been heard as Freia or Eva. But she has sung Ortrud and Elsa, Venus and Elisabeth, Adriano in *Rienzi*, Kundry, Isolde and Brangaene, Fricka, Erda, Waltraute, Sieglinde, one of the Rhine maidens (perhaps two), and all three Brünnhildes. In most of these characterizations she has succeeded in making a deep impression. I have never seen her Ortrud, but I have been informed that it was a truly remarkable impersonation. Her Elsa was the finest I have ever seen. To Ternina's poetic interpretation she added her own greater grace and charm, and a lovelier quality of voice. If, on occasion, the music of the second act proved too high for her, who could sing the music of the dream with such poetic expression? — or the love music in the last act? — as beautiful an impersonation, and of the same kind, as Mary Garden's Mélisande.

Her Venus was another story. She yearned

for years to sing Elisabeth, and when she had satisfied this ambition, she could be persuaded only with difficulty to appear as the goddess. She told me once that she would like to sing both rôles in a single evening — a possible feat, as the two characters never appear together; Rita Fornia, I believe, accomplished the dual impersonation on one occasion at the behest of Colonel Savage. She had in mind a heroine with a dual nature, sacred and profane love so to speak, and Tannhäuser at the mercy of this gemini-born wight. She never was permitted to try this experiment at the Metropolitan, but during her last season there she appeared as Elisabeth. Montreal, and perhaps Brooklyn, had seen this impersonation before it was vouchsafed New York. Mme. Fremstad never succeeded in being very convincing in this rôle. I do not exactly understand why, as its possibilities seem to lie within her limitations. Nor did she sing the music well. On the other hand, her abundantly beautiful and voluptuous Venus, a splendid, towering, blonde figure, shimmering in flesh-coloured garments, was one of her astoundingly accurate characterizations. At the opposite pole to her Sieglinde it was equally a masterpiece of interpretative art, like Duse's Camille "positively enthralling as an exhibition of

OLIVE FREMSTAD AS SIEGLINDE

from a photograph by Aimé Dupont

the gymnastics of perfect suppleness and grace." In both these instances she was inspired perhaps to realize something a little more wonderful than the composer himself had dreamed of. The depth and subtlety and refinement of intense passion were in this Venus — there was no suggestion here of what Sidney Homer once referred to as Mme. Homer's platonic Venus!

Her Sieglinde is firmly intrenched in many of our memories, the best loved of her Wagnerian women and enchantresses. Will there rise another singing actress in our generation to make us forget it? I do not think so. Her melting womanliness in the first act, ending with her complete surrender to Siegmund, her pathetic fatigue in the second act (do you not still see the harassed, shuddering figure stumbling into view and falling voiceless to sleep at the knees of her brother-lover?) remain in the memory like pictures in the great galleries. And how easily in the last act, in her single phrase, by her passionate suggestion of the realization of motherhood, did she wrest the scene from her fellow-artists, no matter who they might be, making such an effect before she fled into the forest depths, that what followed often seemed but anticlimax.

Mme. Fremstad never sang the three Brünn-

hildes in sequence at the Metropolitan Opera House (of late years no soprano has done so), but she was called upon at various times to sing them all separately. Undoubtedly it was as the Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung* that she made the most lasting impression. The scene of the oath on the spear she carried into the realms of Greek tragedy. Did Rachel touch greater heights? Was the French Jewess more electric? The whole performance displayed magnificent proportions, attaining a superb stature in the immolation scene. In scenes of this nature, scenes hovering between life and death, the eloquent grandeur of Mme. Fremstad's style might be observed in its complete flowering. Isolde over the body of Tristan, Brünnhilde over the body of Siegfried, exhibited no mincing pathos; the mood established was one of lofty calm. Great artists realize that this is the true expression of overwhelming emotion. In this connection it seems pertinent and interesting to recall a notable passage in a letter from Ivan Turgeniev to Pauline Viardot: —

"You speak to me also about *Romeo*, the third act; you have the goodness to ask me for some remarks on Romeo. What could I tell you that you have not already known and felt in ad-

vance? The more I reflect on the scene of the third act the more it seems to me that there is only one manner of interpreting it — yours. One can imagine nothing more horrible than finding oneself before the corpse of all that one loves; but the despair that seizes you then ought to be so terrible that, if it is not held and *frozen* by the resolution of suicide, or by another *grand* sentiment, art can no longer render it. Broken cries, sobs, fainting fits, these are nature, but they are not art. The spectator himself will not be moved by that poignant and profound emotion which you stir so easily. Whereas by the manner in which you wish to do Romeo (as I understand what you have written me) you will produce on your auditor an ineffaceable effect. I remember the fine and just observation that you once made on the agitated and restrained little gestures that Rachel made, at the same time maintaining an attitude of calm nobility; with her, perhaps, that was only technique; but in general it is the calm *arising from a strong conviction or from a profound emotion*, that is to say the calm which envelopes the desperate transports of passion from all sides, which communicates to them that purity of line, that ideal and real beauty, the true, the only beauty of art. And, what proves

the truth of this remark, is that life itself — on rare occasions, it is true, at those times when it disengages itself from all that is accidental or commonplace — raises itself to the same kind of beauty. The greatest griefs, as you have said in your letter, are the calmest; and, one could add, the calmest are the most beautiful. But it is necessary to know how to unite the two extremes, unless one would appear cold. It is easier not to attain perfection, easier to rest in the middle of one's journey, the more so because the greater number of spectators demand nothing else, or rather are not accustomed to anything else, but you are what you are only because of this noble ambition to do your best. . . ."

In the complex rôle of Kundry Mme. Fremstad has had no rival. The wild witch of the first act, the enchantress of the second, the repentant Magdalene of the third, all were imaginatively impersonated by this wonderful woman. Certain actors drop their characterizations as soon as the dialogue passes on to another; such as these fail in *Parsifal*, for Kundry, on the stage for the entire third act, has only one word to sing; in the first act she has but few more. Colossally alluring in the second act, in which she symbolized the essence of the "eternal feminine," Mme. Fremstad

OLIVE FREMSTAD AS KUNDRY, ACT I

from a photograph by Mishkin (1913)

projected the first and third act Kundry into the minds and hearts of her audience.

Well-trained in Bayreuth tradition, this singer was no believer in it; she saw no reason for clinging to outworn ideals simply because they prevailed at the Master's own theatre. However, she did not see how an individual could break with tradition in these works without destroying their effect. The break must come from the stage director.

"If Wagner were alive today," she once said to me, "I don't believe that he would sanction a lot of the silly 'business' that is insisted upon everywhere because it is the law at Bayreuth. Wagner was constantly changing everything. When he produced his music dramas they were so entirely new in conception and in staging that they demanded experimentation in many directions. Doubtless certain traditions were founded on the interpretations of certain singers — who probably could not have followed other lines of action, which Wagner might have preferred, so successfully.

"The two scenes which I have particularly in mind are those of the first act of *Tannhäuser* and the second act of *Parsifal*. Both of these scenes, it seems to me, should be arranged with the most

undreamed of beauty in colour and effect. Venus should not pose for a long time in a stiff attitude on an uncomfortable couch. I don't object to the couch, but it should be made more alluring.

"The same objection holds in the second act of *Parsifal*, where Kundry is required to fascinate Parsifal, although she is not given an opportunity of moving from one position for nearly twenty minutes. When Klingsor calls Kundry from below in the first scene of that act, she comes against her will, and I think she should arise gasping and shuddering. I try to give that effect in my voice when I sing the music, but, following Bayreuth, I am standing, motionless, with a veil over my head, so that my face cannot be seen for some time before I sing.

"One singer can do nothing against the mass of tradition. If I changed and the others did not, the effect would be inartistic. But if some stage manager would have the daring to break away, to strive for something better in these matters, how I would love to work with that man!"

Departing from the Wagnerian répertoire, Mme. Fremstad has made notable successes in two rôles, Salome and Armide. That she should be able to do justice to the latter is more astonishing than that she should emerge triumphant from

the Wilde-Strauss collaboration. *Armide*, almost the oldest opera to hold the stage today, is still the French classic model, and it demands in performance adherence to the French grand style, a style implying devotion to the highest artistic ideals. Mme. Fremstad's artistic ideals are perhaps on a higher plane than those of the Paris Conservatoire or the Comédie Française, but it does not follow that she would succeed in moulding them to fit a school of opera with which, to this point, she had been totally unfamiliar. So far as I know, the only other opera Mme. Fremstad had ever sung in French was *Carmen*, an experience which could not be considered as the training for a suitable delineation of the heroine of Gluck's beautiful lyric drama. Still Mme. Fremstad compassed the breach. How, I cannot pretend to say. No less an authority than Victor Maurel pronounced it a triumph of the French classic style.

The moods of Quinault's heroine, of course, suit this singing actress, and she brought to them all her most effectual enchantments, including a series of truly seducing costumes. The imperious unrest of the first act, the triumph of love over hate in the second, the invocation to La Haine in the third, and the final scene of despair in the fifth, all

were depicted with poignant and moving power, and always with fidelity to the style of the piece. She set her own pace in the finale of the first act. The wounded warrior returns to tell how a single combatant has delivered all his prisoners. Armide's half-spoken guess, *O ciel! c'est Renaud!* which she would like to have denied, was uttered in a tone which definitely stimulated the spectator to prepare for the conflict which followed, the conflict in Armide's own breast, between her love for Renaud as a man, and her hatred of him as an enemy. I do not remember to have seen anything on the stage more profound in its implied psychology than her acting of the scene beginning *Enfin il est en ma puissance,* in which she stays her hand with dagger uplifted to kill the enemy-hero, and finally completely conquered by the darts of Love, transports him with her through the air to her own fair gardens.

The singer told me that she went to work on this opera with fear in her heart. "I don't know how I dared do it. I suppose it is because I had the simplicity to believe, with the Germans, that Kundry is the top of everything, and I had sung Kundry. As a matter of fact my leaning toward the classic school dates very far back. My father was a strange man, of evangelical tendencies. He

wrote a hymn-book, which is still in use in Scandinavia, and he had a beautiful natural voice. People often came for miles — simple country people, understand — to hear him sing. My father knew the classic composers and he taught me their songs.

"This training came back to me when I took up the study of *Armide*. It was in May that Mr. Gatti-Casazza asked me if I would sing the work, which, till then, I had never heard. I took the book with me to the mountains and studied — not a note of the music at first, for music is very easy for me anyway; I can always learn that in a short time — but the text. For six weeks I read and re-read the text, always the difficult part for me in learning a new opera, without looking at the music. I found the text of *Armide* particularly difficult because it was in old French, and because it was in verse.

"I worked over it for six weeks, as I tell you, until I had mastered its beauties as well as I could, and then I opened the music score. Here I encountered a dreadful obstacle. Accustomed to Wagner's harmonies, I was puzzled by the French style. I did not see how the music could be sung to the text with dramatic effect. I attended several performances of the work at the Paris Opéra,

but the interpretation there did not assist me in solving the problem. I tried every phrase in fifty different ways in an attempt to arrive at my end, and suddenly, and unexpectedly, I found myself in complete understanding; the exquisite refinement and nobility of the music, the repression, the classic line, all suggested to me the superb, eternal beauty of a Greek temple. Surely this is music that will outlive Wagner!

"Once I understood, it was easy to put my conception on the stage. There is no such thing as genius in singing; at least one cannot depend on genius alone to carry one through an opera. I must know exactly how I am going to sing each phrase before I go upon the stage. Nothing must be left to chance. In studying *Armide* I had sketches sent to me of every scene, and with these I worked until I knew every movement I should make, where I should stand, and when I should walk. Look at my score — at all these minute diagrams and directions. . . ."

Armide was not a popular success in New York, and after one or two performances in its second season at the Metropolitan Opera House it was withdrawn. With the reasons for the failure of this opera to interest the general public Mme. Fremstad, it may well be imagined, had nothing to

do. Her part in it, on the contrary, contributed to what success the work had. New York operagoers have never manifested any particular regard for classic opera in any tongue; *Fidelio* or *Don Giovanni* have never been popular here. Then, although Caruso sang the music of Renaud with a style and beauty of phrasing unusual even for him, his appearance in the part was unfortunate. It was impossible to visualize the chevalier of the romantic story. The second tenor rôle, which is very important, was intrusted to an incompetent singer, and the charming rôle of the Naiad was very inadequately rendered; but the principal fault of the interpretation was due to a misconception regarding the relative importance of the ballet. There are dances in every act of *Armide;* there is no lovelier music of its kind extant than that which Gluck has devoted to his dancers in this opera. Appreciating this fact, Mr. Toscanini refused to part with a note of it, and his delivery of the delightful tunes would have made up a pleasant half-hour in a concert-room. Unfortunately the management did not supplement his efforts by providing a suitable group of dancers. This failure was all but incomprehensible considering the fact that Anna Pavlowa was a member of the Metropolitan company that sea-

son. Had she appeared in *Armide*, its fate in New York, where it was performed for the first time one hundred and thirty-three years after its original production in Paris, might have been far different. It may have been impossible for Mr. Gatti-Casazza to obtain the co-operation of the dancer. Times change. In 1833 Taglioni, then at the height of her powers, danced in London the comparatively insignificant parts of the Swiss peasant in *Guillaume Tell* and the ghostly abbess in *Robert le Diable*. This was the season in which she introduced *La Sylphide* to English theatre-goers.

The history of Richard Strauss's *Salome* in New York has been told so often that it seems quite unnecessary to repeat it here. There must be few indeed of those who will read these lines who do not know how the music drama received only one public performance at the Metropolitan Opera House before it was withdrawn at the request of certain directors. At that one performance Olive Fremstad sang the rôle of Salome. She was also heard at the private dress rehearsal — before an auditorium completely filled with invited guests — and she has sung the part three times in Paris. The singer threw herself into its preparation with her usual energy, and developed

an extraordinary characterization. There was but one flaw, the substitution of a professional dancer for the Dance of the Seven Veils. At this time it had occurred to nobody that the singer who impersonated Salome could dance. How could any one sing the music of the tremendous finale after getting thoroughly out of breath in the terpsichorean exhibition before Herod? The expedient of a substitute was resorted to at the original performance in Dresden, and Olive Fremstad did not disturb this tradition. She allowed Bianca Froehlich to take off the seven veils, a feat which was accomplished much more delicately at the performance than it had been at the dress rehearsal. In Paris a farce resulted from the custom when Mme. Trouhanova not only insisted on wearing a different costume from the Salome whose image she was supposed to be, but also took curtain calls. I think it was Gemma Belincioni, the Italian, who first conceived the idea of Salome dancing her own dance. She was followed by Mary Garden, who discovered what every one should have noticed in the beginning, that the composer has given the singer a long rest after the pantomimic episode.

Aside from this disturbance to the symmetry of the performance, Olive Fremstad was magnificent.

Her entrance was that of a splendid leopard, standing poised on velvet paws on the terrace, and then creeping slowly down the staircase. Her scene with Jochanaan was in truth like the storming of a fortress, and the scene with the Tetrarch was clearly realized. But it was in the closing scene of the drama that Mme. Fremstad, like the poet and the composer, achieved her most effective results. I cannot yet recall her as she crept from side to side of the well in which Jochanaan was confined, waiting for the slave to ascend with the severed head, without that shudder of fascination caused by the glimmering eyes of a monster serpent, or the sleek terribleness of a Bengal tiger. And at the end she suggested, as perhaps it has never before been suggested on the stage, the dregs of love, the refuse of gorged passion.

Singers who "create" parts in great lyric dramas have a great advantage over those who succeed them. Mary Shaw once pointed out to me the probability that Janet Achurch and Elizabeth Robins only won enthusiastic commendation from Bernard Shaw because they were appearing in the Ibsen plays which he was seeing for the first time. He attributed a good part of his pleasure to the interpretations of these ladies. However, he was never satisfied with their per-

formances in plays with which he was more familiar and he never again found anyone entirely to suit him in the Ibsen dramas. Albert Niemann was one of the first tenors to sing Wagner rôles and there are those alive who will tell you that he was one of the great artists, but it is perhaps because they heard him *first* in lyric dramas of such vitality that they confused singer and rôle. Beatty-Kingston, who heard him in 1866, said (in "Music and Manners") that he had torn his voice "to tatters by persistent shoutings at the top of its upper register, and undermined it by excessive worship at the shrines of Bacchus and the Paphian goddess. . . . His 'production' was characterized by a huskiness and scratchiness infinitely distressing to listen to. . . ." No allowances of this sort need be made for the deep impression made by Olive Fremstad. At the Metropolitan Opera House she followed a line of well-beloved and regal interpreters of the Wagner rôles. Both Lilli Lehmann and Milka Ternina had honoured this stage and Lillian Nordica preceded Mme. Fremstad as Kundry there. In her career at the Metropolitan, indeed, Mme. Fremstad sang only three operas at their first performances there, *Salome, Les Contes d'Hoffmann,* and *Armide.* In her other rôles she was forced to

stand comparison with a number of great artists. That she won admiration in them under the circumstances is the more fine an achievement.

I like to think, sometimes, that Olive Fremstad is the reincarnation of Guiditta Pasta, that celebrated Italian singer of the early nineteenth century, who paced triumphantly through the humbler tragedies of *Norma* and *Semiramide*. She too worked hard to gain her ends, and she gained them for a time magnificently. Henry Fothergill Chorley celebrates her art with an enthusiasm that is rare in his pages, and I like to think that he would write similar lines of eulogy about Olive Fremstad could he be called from the grave to do so. There is something of the mystic in all great singers, something incomprehensible, inexplicable, but in the truly great, the Mme. Pastas and the Mme. Fremstads, this quality outstrips all others. It is predominant. And just in proportion as this mysticism triumphs, so too their art becomes triumphant, and flames on the ramparts, a living witness before mankind to the power of the unseen.

August 17, 1916.

Geraldine Farrar

Mme. Farrar's insigne.

Geraldine Farrar

THE autobiography of Geraldine Farrar is a most disappointing document; it explains nothing, it offers the reader no new insights. Given the brains of the writer and the inexhaustibility of the subject, the result is unaccountable. Any opera-goer who has followed the career of this singer with even indifferent attention will find it difficult to discover any revelation of personality or artistry in the book. Geraldine Farrar has always been a self-willed young woman with a plangent ambition and a belief in her own future which has been proved justifiable by the chronological unfolding of her stage career. These qualities are displayed over and over again in the book, together with a certain number of facts about her early life, teachers, and so on. Of that part of her personal experience which would really interest the public she gives a singularly glossed account. Very little attention is paid to composers; none at all to operas, if one may except such meagre descriptions as that accorded to *Julien*, "a hodge-podge of operatic efforts that brought little satisfaction to anybody concerned in it." There are few illuminating anecdotes; no space is devoted to an account of

how Mme. Farrar composes her rôles. She likes this one; she is indifferent to that; she detests a third; but reasons for these prejudices are rarely given. There is little manifestation of that analytic mind with which Mme. Farrar credits herself. There are sketchy references to other singers, usually highly eulogistic, but where did Mme. Farrar hear that remarkable performance of *Carmen* in which both Saleza and Jean de Reszke appeared? For my part, the most interesting lines in the book are those which close the thirteenth chapter: "I cannot say that I am much in sympathy with the vague outlines of the modern French lyric heroines; Mélisande and Ariane, I think, can be better intrusted to artists of a less positive type."

Notwithstanding the fact that she has written a rather dull book, Geraldine Farrar is one of the few really vivid personalities of the contemporary lyric stage. To a great slice of the public she is an idol in the sense that Rachel and Jenny Lind were idols. She has frequently extracted warm praise even from the cold-water taps of discriminating and ordinarily unsympathetic critics. Acting in opera she considers of greater importance than singing. She once told me that she ruthlessly sacrificed tone whenever it seemed to

GERALDINE FARRAR AS ELISABETH

from a photograph by Reutlinger

interfere with dramatic effect. As an actress she has suffered from an excess of zeal, and an impatience of discipline. She composes her parts with some care, but frequently overlays her original conception with extravagant detail, added spontaneously at a performance, if her feelings so dictate.

This lawlessness sometimes leads her astray. It is an unsafe method to follow. Actors who feel the most themselves, unless the feeling is expressed in support of carefully thought-out effects, often leave their auditors cold. It is interesting to recall that Mme. Malibran, who may have excelled Mme. Farrar as a singer, had a similar passion for impromptu stage "business." She refused to give her fellow-artists any idea of how she would carry a part through, and as she allowed her feelings full sway in the matter misunderstandings frequently arose. In acting Desdemona to the Otello of the tenor, Donzelli, for example, she would not determine beforehand the exact point at which he was to seize her. Frequently she gave him a long chase and on one occasion in his pursuit he stumbled and cut himself on his unsheathed dagger. Often it has seemed that Mme. Farrar deliberately chose certain stage "business" with an eye to astounding, and not

with any particular care for the general roundness of her operatic performance. It must also be taken into consideration that no two of Mme. Farrar's impersonations of any one rôle are exactly similar, and that he who may have seen her give a magnificent performance is not too safe in recommending his meticulous neighbour to go to the next. Sometimes she is "modern" and "American" in the deprecatory sense of these words; in some of her parts she exudes no atmospheric suggestion. There are no overtones. The spectator sees exactly what is before his eyes on these occasions; there is no stimulation for the imagination to proceed further. At other times, as in her characterization of the Goosegirl in *Königskinder*, it would seem that she had extracted the last poetic meaning out of the words and music, and had succeeded in making her audience feel, not merely everything that the composer and librettist intended, but a great deal more.

At times she is a very good singer. Curiously enough, it is classic music that she usually sings best. I have heard her sing Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* in a manner almost worthy of her teacher, Lilli Lehmann. There is no mention of this rôle in her book; nor of another in which she was equally successful, Rosaura in *Le Donne*

Curiose, beautifully sung from beginning to end. Mme. Farrar is musical (some singers are not; Mme. Nordica was not, for example), and I have witnessed two manifestations of this quality. On one occasion she played for me on the piano a good portion of the first act of *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, and played it brilliantly, no mean achievement. Another time I stood talking with her and her good friend, Josephine Jacoby, in the wings during the last act of a performance of *Madama Butterfly* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. There was no air of preoccupation on her part, no sense on ours that she was following the orchestra. I became so interested in our conversation, for Mme. Farrar invariably talks well, that I did not even hear the orchestra. But her mind was quite capable of taking care of two things at once. She interrupted a sentence to sing her phrase off stage, and then smilingly continued the conversation. I shall never forget this moment. To me it signified in an instant what Mme. Farrar has taken the pains to explain in pages of her autobiography and which is all summed up in her own comment, written at the time on the programme of the concert of her Boston début, May 26, 1896: "This is what I made my début in, very calm and sedate, not the least nervous."

But Mme. Farrar's vocal method is not God-given, although her voice and her assurance may be, and she sometimes has trouble in producing her upper tones. Instead of opening like a fan, her high voice is frequently pinched, and she has difficulty in singing above the staff. I have never heard her sing Butterfly's entrance with correct intonation, although I have heard her in the part many times. Her Carmen, on the whole, is a most successful performance vocally, and so is (or was) her Elisabeth, especially in the second act. The tessitura of Butterfly is very high, and the rôle is a strain for her. She has frequently said that she finds it easier to sing any two other rôles in her répertoire, and refuses to appear for two days before or after a performance of this Puccini opera.

Mme. Farrar is a fine linguist. She speaks and sings French like a Frenchwoman (I have expert testimony on this point), German like a German, and Italian like an Italian; her enunciation of English is also very clear (she has never sung in opera in English, but has often sung English songs in concert). Her enunciation of Maeterlinck's text in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* was a joy, about the only one she contributed to this performance. And in *Königskinder* and *Le Donne*

Curiose she was equally distinct. In fact there is never any difficulty about following the text of an opera when Geraldine Farrar is singing.

The rôles in which Mme. Farrar achieves her best results, according to my taste, are Manon, the Goosegirl, Margherita (in *Mefistofele*), Elisabeth, Rosaura, Suzanna, and Violetta. Cio-Cio-San, of course, is her most popular creation, and it deserves to some extent the applause of the populace, although I do not think it should be put in the above list. It is certainly not to be considered on the same plane vocally. Other rôles in which she is partially successful are Juliette and Marguerite (in Gounod's *Faust*). I think her Ariane is commonly adjudged a failure. In *Madame Sans-Gêne* she is often comic, but she does not suggest a *bourgeoise* Frenchwoman; in the court scenes she is more like a graceful woman trying to be awkward than an awkward woman trying to be graceful. Her Tosca is lacking in dignity; it is too petulant a performance, too small in conception. In failing to find adequate pleasure in her Carmen I am not echoing popular opinion.

I do not think Mme. Farrar has appeared in *La Traviata* more than two or three times at the Metropolitan Opera House, although she has

probably sung Violetta often in Berlin. On the occasion of Mme. Sembrich's farewell to the American opera stage she appeared as Flora Bervoise as a compliment to the older singer. In her biography she says that Sarah Bernhardt gave her the inspiration for the composition of the heroine of Verdi's opera. It would be interesting to have more details on this point; they are not forthcoming. Of course there have been many Violettas who have sung the music of the first act more brilliantly than Mme. Farrar; in the later acts she often sang beautifully, and her acting was highly expressive and unconventional.

She considered the rôle from the point of view of make-up. Has any one else done this? Violetta was a popular *cocotte;* consequently, she must have been beautiful. But she was a consumptive; consequently, she must have been pale. In the third act Mme. Farrar achieved a very fine dramatic effect with her costume and make-up. Her face was painted a ghastly white, a fact emphasized by her carmined lips and her black hair. She wore pale yellow and carried an enormous black fan, behind which she pathetically hid her face to cough. She introduced novelty into the part at the very beginning of the opera. Unlike most Violettas, she did not make an entrance,

GERALDINE FARRAR AS VIOLETTA

from a photograph by Aimé Dupont (1907)

but sat with her back to the audience, receiving her guests, when the curtain rose.

It has seemed strange to me that the professional reviewers should have attributed the added notes of realism in Mme. Farrar's second edition of Carmen to her appearances in the moving-picture drama. The tendencies displayed in her second year in the part were in no wise, to my mind, a result of her cinema experiences. In fact, the New York critics should have remembered that when Mme. Farrar made her début at the Metropolitan Opera House in the rôle of Juliette, they had rebuked her for these very qualities. She had indulged in a little extra realism in the bedroom and balcony scenes of Gounod's opera, of the sort with which Miss Nethersole created ten-minute furores in her performances of Carmen and Sapho. Again, as Marguerite in *Faust* (her Margherita in *Mefistofele* was a particularly repressed and dreamy representation of the German maiden, one instinct with the highest dramatic and vocal values in the prison scene), she devised "business" calculated to startle, dancing the jewel song, and singing the first stanza of the *Roi de Thulé* air from the cottage, whither she had repaired to fetch her spindle of flax — this last detail seemed to me a very good one. In

early representations of *Madama Butterfly* and *La Boheme* her death scenes were fraught with an intense realism which fitted ill with the spirit of the music. I remember one occasion on which Cio-Cio-San knocked over the rocking-chair in her death struggles, which often embraced the range of the Metropolitan stage.

These points have all been urged against her at the proper times, and there seemed small occasion for attributing her extra activities in the first act of Bizet's opera, in which the cigarette girl engaged in a prolonged scuffle with her rival in the factory, or her more recent whistling of the seguidilla, to her moving-picture experiences. No, Mme. Farrar is overzealous with her public. She once told me that at every performance she cut herself open with a knife and gave herself to the audience. This intensity, taken together with her obviously unusual talent and her personal attractiveness, is what has made her a more than ordinary success on our stage. It is at once her greatest virtue and her greatest fault, artistically speaking. Properly manacled, this quality would make her one of the finest, instead of merely one of the most popular, artists now before the public. But I cannot see how the cinema can be blamed.

Geraldine Farrar

When I first saw the Carmen of Mme. Farrar, her second or third appearance in the part, I was perplexed to find an excuse for its almost unanimous acclamation, and I sought in my mind for extraneous reasons. There was, for example, the conducting of the score by Mr. Toscanini, but that, like Mme. Farrar's interpretation of the Spanish gypsy, never found exceptional favour in my ears. Mr. Caruso's appearance in the opera could not be taken into consideration, because he had frequently sung in it before at the Metropolitan Opera House without awakening any great amount of enthusiasm. In fact, except as Des Grieux, this Italian tenor has never been popularly accepted in French opera in New York. But *Carmen* had long been out of the répertoire, and *Carmen* is an opera people like to hear. The magic of the names of Caruso, Farrar, and Toscanini may have lured auditors and critics into imagining they had heard a more effective performance than was vouchsafed them. Personally I could not compare the revival favourably with the wonderful Manhattan Opera House *Carmen*, which at its best enlisted the services of Mme. Bressler-Gianoli, the best Carmen save one that I have ever heard, Charles Dalmores, Maurice Renaud, Pauline Donalda, Charles Gilibert,

Emma Trentini, and Daddi; Cleofonte Campanini conducting.

At first, to be sure, there was no offensive overlaying of detail in Mme. Farrar's interpretation. It was not cautiously traditional, but there was no evidence that the singer was striving to stray from the sure paths. The music lies well in Mme. Farrar's voice, better than that of any other part I have heard her sing, unless it be Charlotte in *Werther*, and the music, all of it, went well, including the habanera, the seguidilla, the quintet, and the marvellous *Oui, je t'aime, Escamillo* of the last act. Her well-planned, lively dance after the gypsy song at the beginning of the second act drew a burst of applause for music usually permitted to go unrewarded. Her exit in the first act was effective, and her scene with José in the second act was excellently carried through. The card scene, as she acted it, meant very little. No strain was put upon the nerves. There was little suggestion here. The entrance of Escamillo and Carmen in an old victoria in the last act was a stroke of genius on somebody's part. I wonder if this was Mme. Farrar's idea.

But somehow, during this performance, one didn't feel there. It was no more the banks of the Guadalquivir than it was the banks of the

Hudson.' *Carmen* as transcribed by Bizet and Meilhac and Halévy becomes indisputably French in certain particulars; to say that the heroine should be Spanish is not to understand the truth; Maria Gay's interpretation has taught us that, if nothing else has. But atmosphere is demanded, and that Mme. Farrar did not give us, at least she did not give it to me. In the beginning the interpretation made on me the effect of routine,— the sort of performance one can see in any first-rate European opera house,— and later, when the realistic bits were added, the distortion offended me, for French opera always demands a certain elegance of its interpreters; a quality which Mme. Farrar has exposed to us in two other French rôles.

Her Manon is really an adorable creature. I have never seen Mary Garden in this part, but I have seen many French singers, and to me Mme. Farrar transcends them all. A very beautiful and moving performance she gives, quite in keeping with the atmosphere of the opera. Her adieu to the little table and her farewell to Des Grieux in the desert always start a lump in my throat.

Her Charlotte (a rôle, I believe, cordially detested by Mme. Farrar, and one which she refuses to sing) is to me an even more moving conception.

This sentimental opera of Massenet's has never been appreciated in America at its true value, although it is one of the most frequently represented works at the Paris Opéra-Comique. When it was first introduced here by Emma Eames and Jean de Rezske, it found little favour, and later Mme. Farrar and Edmond Clément were unable to arouse interest in it (it was in *Werther*, at the New Theatre, that Alma Gluck made her operatic début, in the rôle of Sophie). But Geraldine Farrar as the hesitating heroine of the tragic and sentimental romance made the part very real, as real in its way as Henry James's "Portrait of a Lady," and as moving. The whole third act she carried through in an amazingly pathetic key, and she always sang *Les Larmes* as if her heart were really breaking.

What a charming figure she was in Wolf-Ferrari's pretty operas, *Le Donne Curiose* and *Suzannen's Geheimness!* And she sang the lovely measures with the Mozartean purity which at her best she had learned from Lilli Lehmann. Her Zerlina and her Cherubino were delightful impersonations, invested with vast roguery, although in both parts she was a trifle self-conscious, especially in her assumption of awkwardness. Her Elisabeth, sung in New York but seldom,

GERALDINE FARRAR AS LOUISE IN *JULIEN*

from a photograph by White (1914)

though she has recently appeared in this rôle with the Chicago Opera Company, was noble in conception and execution, and her Goosegirl one of the most fascinating pictures in the operatic gallery of our generation. Her Mignon was successful in a measure, perhaps not an entirely credible figure. Her Nedda was very good.

Her Louise in *Julien* was so fine dramatically, especially in the Montmartre episode, as to make one wish that she could sing the real Louise in the opera of that name. Once, however, at a performance of Charpentier's earlier work at the Manhattan Opera House, she told me that she would never, never do so. She has been known to change her mind. Her Ariane, I think, was her most complete failure. It is a part which requires plasticity and nobility of gesture and interpretation of a kind with which her style is utterly at variance. And yet I doubt if Mme. Farrar had ever sung a part to which she had given more consideration. It was for this opera, in fact, that she worked out a special method of vocal speech, half-sung, half-spoken, which enabled her to deliver the text more clearly.

Whether Mme. Farrar will undergo further artistic development I very much doubt. She tells us in her autobiography that she can study

nothing in any systematic way, and it is only through very sincere study and submission to well-intended restraint that she might develop still further into the artist who might conceivably leave a more considerable imprint on the music drama of her time. It is to be doubted if Mme. Farrar cares for these supreme laurels; her success with her public — which is pretty much all the public — is so complete in its way that she may be entirely satisfied with that by no means to be despised triumph. Once (in 1910) she gave an indication to me that this might be so, in the following words:

"Emma Calvé was frequently harshly criticized, but when she sang the opera house was crowded. It was because she gave her personality to the public. Very frequently there are singers who give most excellent interpretations, who are highly praised, and whom nobody goes to see. Now in the last analysis there are two things which I do. I try to be true to myself and my own conception of the dramatic fitness of things on the stage, and I try to please my audiences. To do that you must mercilessly reveal your personality. There is no other way. In my humble way I am an actress who happens to be appearing in opera. I sacrifice tonal beauty to dramatic fitness every

time I think it is necessary for an effect, and I shall continue to do it. I leave mere singing to the warblers. I am more interested in acting myself."

There is much that is sound sense in these remarks, but it is a pity that Mme. Farrar carries her theories out literally. To me, and to many another, there is something a little sad in the acceptance of easily won victory. If she would, Mme. Farrar might improve her singing and acting in certain rôles in which she has already appeared, and she might enlarge her répertoire to include more of the rôles which have a deeper significance in operatic and musical history. At present her activity is too consistent to allow time for much reflection. It would afford me the greatest pleasure to learn that this singer had decided to retire for a few months to devote herself to study and introspection, so that she might return to the stage with a new and brighter fire and a more lasting message.

Farrar fara — forse.

July 14, 1916.

Mary Garden

"Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."

Gertrude Stein.

Mary Garden

THE influence of Ibsen on our stage has been most subtle. The dramas of the sly Norwegian are infrequently performed, but almost all the plays of the epoch bear his mark. And he has done away with the actor, for nowadays emotions are considered rude on the stage. Our best playwrights have striven for an intellectual monotone. So it happens that for the Henry Irvings, the Sarah Bernhardts, and the Edwin Booths of a younger generation we must turn to the operatic stage, and there we find them: Maurice Renaud, Olive Fremstad — and Mary Garden.

There is nothing casual about the art of Mary Garden. Her achievements on the lyric stage are not the result of happy accident. Each detail of her impersonations, indeed, is a carefully studied and selected effect, chosen after a review of possible alternatives. Occasionally, after a trial, Miss Garden even rejects the instinctive. This does not mean that there is no feeling behind her performances. The deep burning flame of poetic imagination illuminates and warms into life the conception wrought in the study chamber. Nothing is left to chance, and it is seldom, and always for some good reason, that this artist permits

herself to alter particulars of a characterization during the course of a representation.

I have watched her many times in the same rôle without detecting any great variance in the arrangement of details, and almost as many times I have been blinded by the force of her magnetic imaginative power, without which no interpreter can hope to become an artist. This, it seems to me, is the highest form of stage art; certainly it is the form which on the whole is the most successful in exposing the intention of author and composer, although occasionally a Geraldine Farrar or a Salvini will make it apparent that the inspiration of the moment also has its value. However, I cannot believe that the true artist often experiments in public. He conceives in seclusion and exposes his conception, completely realized, breathed into, so to speak, on the stage. When he first studies a character it is his duty to feel the emotions of that character, and later he must project these across the footlights into the hearts of his audience; but he cannot be expected to feel these emotions every night. He must *remember* how he felt them before. And sometimes even this ideal interpreter makes mistakes. Neither instinct nor intelligence — not even genius — can compass every range.

Mary Garden

Miss Garden's career has been closely identified with the French lyric stage and, in at least two operas, she has been the principal interpreter — and a material factor in their success — of works which have left their mark on the epoch, stepping-stones in the musical brook. The rôles in which she has most nearly approached the ideal are perhaps Mélisande, Jean (*Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*), Sapho, Thais, Louise, Marguerite (in Gounod's *Faust*), Chrysis (in *Aphrodite*), and Monna Vanna. I cannot speak personally of her Tosca, her Orlanda, her Manon, her Violetta, or her Chérubin (in Massenet's opera of the same name). I do not care for her Carmen as a whole, and to my mind her interpretation of Salome lacks the inevitable quality which stamped Olive Fremstad's performance. In certain respects she realizes the characters and sings the music of Juliet and Ophélie, but this is *vieux jeu* for her, and I do not think she has effaced the memory of Emma Eames in the one and Emma Calvé in the other of these rôles. She was somewhat vague and not altogether satisfactory (this may be ascribed to the paltriness of the parts) as Prince Charmant in *Cendrillon*, *la belle* Dulcinée in *Don Quichotte*, and Grisélidis. On the other hand, in *Natoma* — her only appearance thus far in

opera in English — she made a much more important contribution to the lyric stage than either author or composer.

Mary Garden was born in Scotland, but her family came to this country when she was very young, and she grew up in the vicinity of Chicago. She may therefore be adjudged at least as much an American singer as Olive Fremstad. She studied in France, however, and this fortuitous circumstance accounts for the fact that all her great rôles are French, and for the most part modern French. Her two Italian rôles, Violetta and Tosca, she sings in French, although I believe she has made attempts to sing Puccini's opera in the original tongue. Her other ventures afield have included Salome, sung in French, and Natoma, sung in English. Her pronunciation of French on the stage has always aroused comment, some of it jocular. Her accent is strongly American, a matter which her very clear enunciation does not leave in doubt. However, it is a question in my mind if Miss Garden did not weigh well the charm of this accent and its probable effect on French auditors. You will remember that Helena Modjeska spoke English with a decided accent, as do Fritzi Scheff, Alla Nazimova, and Mitzi Hajos in our own day; you may also realize that to the public,

which includes yourself, this is no inconsiderable part of their charm. Parisians do not take pleasure in hearing their language spoken by a German, but they have never had any objection — quite the contrary — to an English or American accent on their stage, although I do not believe this general preference has ever been allowed to affect performances at the Comédie Française, except when *l'Anglais tel qu'on le parle* is on the *affiches.* At least it is certain that Miss Garden speaks French quite as easily as — perhaps more easily than — she does English, and many of the eccentricities of her stage speech are not noticeable in private life.

Many of the great artists of the theatre have owed their first opportunity to an accident; it was so with Mary Garden. She once told me the story herself and I may be allowed to repeat it in her own words, as I put them down shortly after:

"I became friends with Sybil Sanderson, who was singing in Paris then, and one day when I was at her house Albert Carré, the director of the Opéra-Comique, came to call. I was sitting by the window as he entered, and he said to Sybil, 'That woman has a profile; she would make a charming Louise.' Charpentier's opera, I should explain, had not yet been produced. 'She has a

voice, too,' Sybil added. Well, M. Carré took me to the theatre and listened while I sang airs from *Traviata* and *Manon*. Then he gave me the partition of *Louise* and told me to go home and study it. I had the rôle in my head in fifteen days. This was in March, and M. Carré engaged me to sing at his theatre beginning in October. . . . One spring day, however, when I was feeling particularly depressed over the death of a dog that had been run over by an omnibus, M. Carré came to me in great excitement; Mme. Rioton, the singer cast for the part, was ill, and he asked me if I thought I could sing Louise. I said 'Certainly,' in the same tone with which I would have accepted an invitation to dinner. It was only bluff; I had never rehearsed the part with orchestra, but it was my chance, and I was determined to take advantage of it. Besides, I had studied the music so carefully that I could have sung it note for note if the orchestra had played *The Star-Spangled Banner* simultaneously.

"Evening came and found me in the theatre. Mme. Rioton had recovered sufficiently to sing; she appeared during the first two acts, and then succumbed immediately before the air, *Depuis le Jour*, which opens the third act. I was in my dressing-room when M. Carré sent for me. He told me that

an announcement had been made before the curtain that I would be substituted for Mme. Rioton. I learned afterwards that André Messager, who was directing the orchestra, had strongly advised against taking this step; he thought the experiment was too dangerous, and urged that the people in the house should be given their money back. The audience, you may be sure, was none too pleased at the prospect of having to listen to a Mlle. Garden of whom they had never heard. Will you believe me when I tell you that I was never less nervous? . . . I must have succeeded, for I sang Louise over two hundred times at the Opéra-Comique after that. The year was 1900, and I had made my début on Friday, April 13!"

I have no contemporary criticisms of this event at hand, but one of my most valued souvenirs is a photograph of the charming interpreter as she appeared in the rôle of Louise at the beginning of her career. However, in one of Gauthier-Villars's compilations of his musical criticisms, which he signed "L'Ouvreuse" ("La Ronde des Blanches"), I discovered the following, dated February 21, 1901, a detail of a review of Gabriel Pierné's opera, *La Fille de Tabarin:* "Mlle. Garden a une aimable figure, une voix aimable, et un petit reste d'accent exotique, aimable aussi."

Of the composer of *Louise* Miss Garden had many interesting things to say in after years: "The opera is an expression of Charpentier's own life," she told me one day. "It is the opera of Montmartre, and he was the King of Montmartre, a real bohemian, to whom money and fame meant nothing. He was satisfied if he had enough to pay *consommations* for himself and his friends at the Rat Mort. He had won the *Prix de Rome* before *Louise* was produced, but he remained poor. He lived in a dirty little garret up on the *butte*, and while he was writing this realistic picture of his own life he was slowly starving to death. André Messager knew him and tried to give him money, but he wouldn't accept it. He was very proud. Messager was obliged to carry up milk in bottles, with a loaf of bread, and say that he wanted to lunch with him, in order to get Charpentier to take nourishment.

"Meanwhile, little by little, *Louise* was being slowly written. . . . Part of it he wrote in the Rat Mort, part in his own little room, and part of it in the Moulin de la Galette, one of the gayest of the Montmartre dance halls. High up on the *butte* the gaunt windmill sign waves its arms; from the garden you can see all Paris. It is the view that you get in the third act of *Louise*. . . .

The production of his opera brought Charpentier nearly half a million francs, but he spent it all on the working-girls of Montmartre. He even established a conservatory, so that those with talent might study without paying. And his mother, whom he adored, had everything she wanted until she died. . . . He always wore the artist costume, corduroy trousers, blouse, and flowing tie, even when he came to the Opéra-Comique in the evening. Money did not change his habits. His kingdom extended over all Paris after the production of *Louise*, but he still preferred his old friends in Montmartre to the new ones his success had made for him, and he dissipated his strength and talent. He was an adorable man; he would give his last sou to any one who asked for it!

"To celebrate the fiftieth performance of *Louise*, M. Carré gave a dinner in July, 1900. Most appropriately he did not choose the Café Anglais or the Café de Paris for this occasion, but Charpentier's own beloved Moulin de la Galette. It was at this dinner that the composer gave the first sign of his physical decline. He had scarcely seated himself at the table, surrounded by the great men and women of Paris, before he fainted. . . ."

The subsequent history of this composer of the lower world we all know too well; how he journeyed

south and lived in obscurity for years, years which were embellished with sundry rumours relating to future works, rumours which were finally crowned by the production of *Julien* at the Opéra-Comique — and subsequently at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. The failure of this opera was abysmal.

Louise is a rôle which Miss Garden has sung very frequently in America, and, as she may be said to have contributed to Charpentier's fame and popularity in Paris, she did as much for him here. This was the second part in which she appeared in New York. The dynamics of the rôle are finely wrought out, deeply felt; the characterization is extraordinarily keen, although after the first act it never touches the heart. The singing-actress conceives the character of the sewing-girl as hard and brittle, and she does not play it for sympathy. She acts the final scene with the father with the brilliant polish of a diamond cut in Amsterdam, and with heartless brutality. Stroke after stroke she devotes to a ruthless exposure of what she evidently considers to be the nature of this futile drab. It is the scene in the play which evidently interests her most, and it is the scene to which she has given her most careful attention. In the first act, to be sure, she is *gamine* and ador-

able in her scenes with her father, and touchingly poignant in the despairing cry which closes the act, *Paris!* In the next two acts she wisely submerges herself in the general effect. She allows the sewing-girls to make the most of their scene, and, after she has sung *Depuis le Jour*, she gives the third act wholly into the keeping of the ballet, and the interpreters of Julien and the mother.

There are other ways of singing and acting this rôle. Others have sung and acted it, others will sing and act it, effectively. The abandoned (almost aggressive) perversity of Miss Garden's performance has perhaps not been equalled, but this rôle does not belong to her as completely as do Thais and Mélisande; no other interpreters will satisfy any one who has seen her in these two parts.

Miss Garden made her American début in Massenet's opera, *Thais*, written, by the way, for Sybil Sanderson. The date was November 25, 1907. Previous to this time Miss Garden had never sung this opera in Paris, but she had appeared in it during a summer season at one of the French watering places. Since that night, nearly ten years ago, however, it has become the most stable feature of her répertoire. She has sung it frequently in Paris, and during the long tours under-

taken by the Chicago Opera Company this sentimental tale of the Alexandrian courtesan and the hermit of the desert has startled the inhabitants of hamlets in Iowa and California. It is a very brilliant scenic show, and is utterly successful as a vehicle for the exploitation of the charms of a fragrant personality. Miss Garden has found the part grateful; her very lovely figure is particularly well suited to the allurements of Grecian drapery, and the unwinding of her charms at the close of the first act is an event calculated to stir the sluggish blood of a hardened theatre-goer, let alone that of a Nebraska farmer. The play becomes the more vivid as it is obvious that the retiary meshes with which she ensnares Athanaël are strong enough to entangle any of us. Thais-become-nun — Evelyn Innes should have sung this character before she became Sister Teresa — is in violent contrast to these opening scenes, but the acts in the desert, as the Alexandrian strumpet wilts before the aroused passion of the monk, are carried through with equal skill by this artist who is an adept in her means of expression and expressiveness.

The opera is sentimental, theatrical, and over its falsely constructed drama — a perversion of Anatole France's psychological tale — Massenet has

overlaid as banal a coverlet of music as could well be devised by an eminent composer. "The bad fairies have given him [Massenet] only one gift," writes Pierre Lalo, ". . . the desire to please." It cannot be said that Miss Garden allows the music to affect her interpretation. She sings some of it, particularly her part in the duet in the desert, with considerable charm and warmth of tone. I have never cared very much for her singing of the mirror air, although she is dramatically admirable at this point; on the other hand, I have found her rendering of the farewell to Eros most pathetic in its tenderness. At times she has attacked the high notes, which fall in unison with the exposure of her attractions, with brilliancy; at other times she has avoided them altogether (it must be remembered that Miss Sanderson, for whom this opera was written, had a voice like the Tour Eiffel; she sang to G above the staff). But the general tone of her interpretation has not been weakened by the weakness of the music or by her inability to sing a good deal of it. Quite the contrary. I am sure she sings the part with more steadiness of tone than Milka Ternina ever commanded for Tosca, and her performance is equally unforgettable.

After the production of *Louise*, Miss Garden's

name became almost legendary in Paris, and many are the histories of her subsequent career there. Parisians and foreign visitors alike flocked to the Opéra-Comique to see her in the series of delightful rôles which she assumed — Orlanda, Manon, Chrysis, Violetta . . . and Mélisande. It was during the summer of 1907 that I first heard her there in two of the parts most closely identified with her name, Chrysis and Mélisande.

Camille Erlanger's *Aphrodite,* considered as a work of art, is fairly meretricious. As a theatrical entertainment it offers many elements of enjoyment. Based on the very popular novel of Pierre Louÿs — at one time forbidden circulation in America by Anthony Comstock — it winds its pernicious way through a tale of prostitution, murder, theft, sexual inversion, drunkenness, sacrilege, and crucifixion, and concludes, quite simply, in a cemetery. The music is appallingly banal, and has never succeeded in doing anything else but annoy me when I have thought of it at all. It never assists in creating an atmosphere; it bears no relation to stage picture, characters, or situation. Both gesture and colour are more important factors in the consideration of the pleasurable elements of this piece than the weak trickle of its sickly melodic flow.

MARY GARDEN AS CHRYSIS (1906)

For the most part, at a performance, one does not listen to the music. Nevertheless, *Aphrodite* calls one again and again. Its success in Paris was simply phenomenal, and the opera is still in the répertoire of the Opéra-Comique. This success was due in a measure to the undoubted "punch" of the story, in a measure to the orgy which M. Carré had contrived to embellish the third act, culminating in the really imaginative dancing of the beautiful Regina Badet and the horrible scene of the crucifixion of the negro slave; but, more than anything else, it was due to the rarely compelling performance of Mary Garden as the courtesan who consented to exchange her body for the privilege of seeing her lover commit theft, sacrilege, and murder. In her bold entrance, flaunting her long lemon scarf, wound round her body like a Nautch girl's säri, which illy concealed her fine movements, she at once gave the picture, not alone of the *cocotte* of the period but of a whole life, a whole atmosphere, and this she maintained throughout the disclosure of the tableaux. In the prison scene she attained heights of tragic acting which I do not think even she has surpassed elsewhere. The pathos of her farewell to her two little Lesbian friends, and the gesture with which she drained the poison cup, linger in the memory,

refusing to give up their places to less potent details.

I first heard Debussy's lyric drama, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, at the Opéra-Comique, with Miss Garden as the principal interpreter. It is generally considered the greatest achievement of her mimic art. Somehow by those means at the command of a fine artist, she subdued her very definite personality and moulded it into the vague and subtle personage created by Maurice Maeterlinck. Even great artists grasp at straws for assistance, and it is interesting to know that to Miss Garden a wig is the all important thing. "Once I have donned the wig of a character, I am that character," she told me once. "It would be difficult for me to go on the stage in my own hair." Nevertheless, I believe she has occasionally inconsistently done so as Louise.

In Miss Garden's score of *Pelléas* Debussy has written, "In the future, others may sing Mélisande, but you alone will remain the woman and the artist I had hardly dared hope for." It must be remembered, however, that composers are notoriously fickle; that they prefer having their operas given in any form rather than not at all; that ink is cheap and musicians prolific in sentiments. In how many *Manon* scores did Massenet write his tender eternal finalities? Perhaps little Maggie

Teyte, who imitated Mary Garden's Mélisande as Elsie Janis imitates Sarah Bernhardt, cherishes a dedicated score now. Memory tells me I have seen such a score, but memory is sometimes a false jade.

In her faded mediæval gowns, with her long plaits of golden hair,— in the first scene she wore it loose,— Mary Garden became at once in the spectator's mind the princess of enchanted castles, the cymophanous heroine of a *féerie*, the dream of a poet's tale. In gesture and in musical speech, in tone-colour, she was faithful to the first wonderful impression of the eye. There has been in our day no more perfect example of characterization offered on the lyric stage than Mary Garden's lovely Mélisande. . . . *Ne me touchez pas!* became the cry of a terrified child, a real protestation of innocence. *Je ne suis pas heureuse ici*, was uttered with a pathos of expression which drove its helplessness into our hearts. The scene at the fountain with Pelléas, in which Mélisande loses her ring, was played with such delicate shading, such poetic imagination, that one could almost crown the interpreter as the creator, and the death scene was permeated with a fragile, simple beauty as compelling as that which Carpaccio put into his picture of *Santa Ursula*, a picture indeed which

Miss Garden's performance brought to mind more than once. If she sought inspiration from the art of the painter for her delineation, it was not to Rossetti and Burne-Jones that she went. Rather did she gather some of the soft bloom from the paintings of Bellini, Carpaccio, Giotto, Cimabue . . . especially Botticelli; had not the spirit and the mood of the two frescos from the Villa Lemmi in the Louvre come to life in this gentle representation?

Before she appeared as Mélisande in New York, Miss Garden was a little doubtful of the probable reception of the play here. She was surprised and delighted with the result, for the drama was presented in the late season of 1907-08 at the Manhattan Opera House no less than seven times to very large audiences. The singer talked to me before the event: "It took us four years to establish *Pelléas et Mélisande* in the répertoire of the Opéra-Comique. At first the public listened with disfavour or indecision, and performances could only be given once in two weeks. As a contrast I might mention the immediate success of *Aphrodite*, which I sang three or four times a week until fifty representations had been achieved, without appearing in another rôle. *Pelléas* was a different matter. The mystic beauty of the poet's mood and the rev-

MARY GARDEN AS MELISANDE

from a photograph by Davis and Eickemeyer (1908)

olutionary procedures of the musician were not calculated to touch the great public at once. Indeed, we had to teach our audiences to enjoy it. Americans who, I am told, are fond of Maeterlinck, may appreciate its very manifest beauty at first hearing, but they didn't in Paris. At the early representations, individuals whistled and made cat-calls. One night three young men in the first row of the orchestra whistled through an entire scene. I don't believe those young men will ever forget the way I looked at them. . . . But after each performance it was the same: the applause drowned out the hisses. The balconies and galleries were the first to catch the spirit of the piece, and gradually it grew in public favour, and became a success, that is, comparatively speaking. *Pelléas et Mélisande*, like many another work of true beauty, appeals to a special public and, consequently, the number of performances has always been limited, and perhaps always will be. I do not anticipate that it will crowd from popular favour such operas as *Werther*, *La Vie de Bohème* and *Carmen*, each of which is included in practically every week's répertoire at the Opéra-Comique.

" We interpreters of Debussy's lyric drama were naturally very proud, because we felt that we were

assisting in the making of musical history. Maeterlinck, by the way, has never seen the opera. He wished his wife, Georgette Leblanc, to ' create ' the rôle of Mélisande, but Debussy and Carré had chosen me, and the poet did not have his way. He wrote an open letter to the newspapers of Paris in which he frankly expressed his hope that the work would fail. Later, when composers approached him in regard to setting his dramas to music, he made it a condition that his wife should sing them. She did appear as Ariane, you will remember, but Lucienne Bréval first sang Monna Vanna, and Maeterlinck's wrath again vented itself in pronunciamentos."

Miss Garden spoke of the settings. "The *décor* should be dark and sombre. Mrs. Campbell set the play in the Renaissance period, an epoch flooded with light and charm. I think she was wrong. Absolute latitude is permitted the stage director, as Maeterlinck has made no restrictions in the book. The director of the Opéra at Brussels followed Mrs. Campbell's example, and when I appeared in the work there I felt that I was singing a different drama."

One afternoon in the autumn of 1908, when I was Paris correspondent of the "New York Times," I received the following telegram from

Miss Garden: "Venez ce soir à 5½ chez Mlle. Chasles 112 Boulevard Malesherbes me voir en Salome." It was late in the day when the message came to me, and I had made other plans, but you may be sure I put them all aside. A *petit-bleu* or two disposed of my engagements, and I took a fiacre in the blue twilight of the Paris afternoon for the *salle de danse* of Mlle. Chasles. On my way I recollected how some time previously Miss Garden had informed me of her intention of interpreting the Dance of the Seven Veils herself, and how she had attempted to gain the co-operation of Maraquita, the ballet mistress of the Opéra-Comique, a plan which she was forced to abandon, owing to some rapidly revolving wheels of operatic intrigue. So the new Salome went to Mlle. Chasles, who sixteen years ago was delighting the patrons of the Opéra-Comique with her charming dancing. She it was who, materially assisted by Miss Garden herself, arranged the dance, dramatically significant in gesture and step, which the singer performed at the climax of Richard Strauss's music drama.

Mlle. Chasles's *salle de danse* I discovered to be a large square room; the floor had a rake like that of the Opéra stage in Paris. There were footlights, and seats in front of them for spectators.

The walls were hung with curious old prints and engravings of famous dancers, Mlle. Sallé, La Camargo, Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, and Cerito.

This final rehearsal — before the rehearsals in New York which preceded her first appearance in the part anywhere at the Manhattan Opera House — was witnessed by André Messager, who intended to mount *Salome* at the Paris Opéra the following season, Mlle. Chasles, an accompanist, a maid, a hair-dresser, and myself. I noted that Miss Garden's costume differed in a marked degree from those her predecessors had worn. For the entrance of Salome she had provided a mantle of bright orange shimmering stuff, embroidered with startling azure and emerald flowers and sparkling with spangles. Under this she wore a close-fitting garment of netted gold, with designs in rubies and rhinestones, which fell from somewhere above the waistline to her ankles. This garment was also removed for the dance, and Miss Garden emerged in a narrow strip of flesh-coloured tulle. Her arms, shoulders, and legs were bare. She wore a red wig, the hair falling nearly to her waist (later she changed this detail and wore the cropped wig which became identified with her impersonation of the part). Two jewels, an emerald on one little finger, a ruby on the other, com-

pleted her decoration. The seven veils were of soft, clinging tulle.

Swathed in these veils, she began the dance at the back of the small stage. Only her eyes were visible. Terrible, slow . . . she undulated forward, swaying gracefully, and dropped the first veil. What followed was supposed to be the undoing of the jaded Herod. I was moved by this spectacle at the time, and subsequently this pantomimic dance was generally referred to as the culminating moment in her impersonation of Salome. On this occasion, I remember, she proved to us that the exertion had not fatigued her, by singing the final scene of the music drama, while André Messager played the accompaniment on the piano.

I did not see Mary Garden's impetuous and highly curious interpretation of the strange eastern princess until a full year later, as I remained in Paris during the extent of the New York opera season. The following autumn, however, I heard *Salome* in its second season at the Manhattan Opera House — and I was disappointed. Nervous curiosity seemed to be the consistent note of this hectic interpretation. The singer was never still; her use of gesture was untiring. To any one who had not seen her in other parts, the actress must have seemed utterly lacking in repose. This

was simply her means, however, of suggesting the intense nervous perversity of Salome. Mary Garden could not have seen Nijinsky in *Scheherazade* at this period, and yet the performances were astonishingly similar in intention. But the Strauss music and the Wilde drama demand a more voluptuous and sensual treatment, it would seem to me, than the suggestion of monkey-love which absolutely suited Nijinsky's part. However, the general opinion (as often happens) ran counter to mine, and, aside from the reservation that Miss Garden's voice was unable to cope with the music, the critics, on the whole, gave her credit for an interesting performance. Indeed, in this music drama she made one of the great popular successes of her career, a career which has been singularly full of appreciated achievements.

Chicago saw Mary Garden in *Salome* a year later, and Chicago gasped, as New York had gasped when the drama was performed at the Metropolitan Opera House. The police — no less an authority — put a ban on future performances at the Auditorium. Miss Garden was not pleased, and she expressed her displeasure in the frankest terms. I received at that time a series of characteristic telegrams. One of them read: "My

art is going through the torture of slow death. Oh Paris, splendeur de mes desirs!"

It was with the (then) Philadelphia-Chicago Opera Company that Miss Garden made her first experiment with opera in English, earning thereby the everlasting gratitude and admiration — which she already possessed in no small measure — of Charles Henry Meltzer. She was not sanguine before the event. In January, 1911, she said to me: "No, malgré Tito Ricordi, NO! I don't believe in opera in English, I never have believed in it, and I don't think I ever shall believe in it. Of course I'm willing to be convinced. You see, in the first place, I think all music dramas should be sung in the languages in which they are written; well, that makes it impossible to sing anything in the current répertoire in English, doesn't it? The only hope for opera in English, so far as I can see it, lies in America or England producing a race of composers, and they haven't it in them. It isn't in the blood. Composition needs Latin blood, or something akin to it; the Anglo-Saxon or the American can't write music, great music, at least not yet. . . . I doubt if any of us alive to-day will live to hear a great work written to a libretto in our own language.

"Now I am going to sing Victor Herbert's

Natoma, in spite of what I have just told you, because I don't want to have it said that I have done anything to hinder what is now generally known as 'the cause.' For the first time a work by a composer who may be regarded as American is to be given a chance with the best singers, with a great orchestra, and a great conductor, in the leading opera house in America — perhaps the leading opera house anywhere. It seems to me that every one who can should put his shoulder to this kind of wheel and set it moving. I shall be better pleased than anybody else if *Natoma* proves a success and paves the way for the successful production of other American lyric dramas. Of course *Natoma* cannot be regarded as 'grand opera.' It is not music, like *Tristan*, for instance. It is more in the style of the lighter operas which are given in Paris, but it possesses much melodic charm and it may please the public. I shall sing it and I shall try to do it just as well as I have tried to do Salome and Thais and Mélisande."

She kept her word, and out of the hodge-podge of an opera book which stands unrivalled for its stiltedness of speech, she succeeded in creating one of her most notable characters. She threw vanity aside in making up for the rôle, painting

her face and body a dark brown; she wore two long straight braids of hair, depending on either side from the part in the middle of her forehead. Her garment was of buckskin, and moccasins covered her feet. She crept rather than walked. The story, as might be imagined, was one of love and self-sacrifice, touching here and there on the preserves of *L'Africaine* and *Lakmé*, the whole concluding with the voluntary immersion of Natoma in a convent. Fortunately, the writer of the book remembered that Miss Garden had danced in *Salome* and he introduced a similar pantomimic episode in *Natoma*, a dagger dance, which was one of the interesting points in the action. The music suited her voice; she delivered a good deal of it almost *parlando*, and the vapid speeches of Mr. Redding tripped so audibly off her tongue that their banality became painfully apparent.

The story has often been related how Massenet, piqued by the frequently repeated assertion that his muse was only at his command when he depicted female frailty, determined to write an opera in which only one woman was to appear, and she was to be both mute and a virgin! *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, perhaps the most poetically conceived of Massenet's lyric dramas, was the result of this decision. Until Mr. Hammerstein made

up his mind to produce the opera, the rôle of Jean had invariably been sung by a man. Mr. Hammerstein thought that Americans would prefer a woman in the part. He easily enlisted the interest of Miss Garden in this scheme, and Massenet, it is said, consented to make certain changes in the score. The taste of the experiment was doubtful, but it was one for which there had been much precedent. Nor is it necessary to linger on Sarah Bernhardt's assumption of the rôles of Hamlet, Shylock, and the Duc de Reichstadt. In the "golden period of song," Orfeo was not the only man's part sung by a woman. Mme. Pasta frequently appeared as Romeo in Zingarelli's opera and as Tancredi, and she also sang Otello on one occasion when Henrietta Sontag was the Desdemona. The rôle of Orfeo, I believe, was written originally for a *castrato*, and later, when the work was refurbished for production at what was then the Paris Opéra, Gluck allotted the rôle to a tenor. Now it is sung by a woman as invariably as are Stephano in *Roméo et Juliette* and Siebel in *Faust*. There is really more excuse for the masquerade of sex in Massenet's opera. The timid, pathetic little juggler, ridiculous in his inefficiency, is a part for which tenors, as they exist to-day, seem manifestly unsuited. And certainly no tenor

could hope to make the appeal in the part that Mary Garden did. In the second act she found it difficult to entirely conceal the suggestion of her sex under the monk's robe, but the sad little figure of the first act and the adorable juggler of the last, performing his imbecile tricks before Our Lady's altar, were triumphant details of an artistic impersonation; on the whole, one of Miss Garden's most moving performances.

Miss Garden has sung *Faust* many times. Are there many sopranos who have not, whatever the general nature of their répertoires? She is very lovely in the rôle of Marguerite. I have indicated elsewhere her skill in endowing the part with poetry and imaginative force without making ducks and drakes of the traditions. In the garden scene she gave an exhibition of her power to paint a fanciful fresco on a wall already surcharged with colour, a charming, wistful picture. I have never seen any one else so effective in the church and prison scenes; no one else, it seems to me, has so tenderly conceived the plight of the simple German girl. The opera of *Roméo et Juliette* does not admit of such serious dramatic treatment, and Thomas's *Hamlet*, as a play, is absolutely ridiculous. After the mad scene, for example, the stage directions read that the ballet "waltzes

sadly away." I saw Mary Garden play Ophélie once at the Paris Opéra, and I must admit that I was amused; I think she was amused too! I was equally amused some years later when I heard Titta Ruffo sing the opera. I am afraid I cannot take *Hamlet* as a lyric drama seriously.

In Paris, Violetta is one of Miss Garden's popular rôles. When she came to America she fancied she might sing the part here. "Did you ever see a thin Violetta?" she asked the reporters. But so far she has not appeared in *La Traviata* on this side of the Atlantic, although Robert Hichens wrote me that he had recently heard her in this opera at the Paris Opéra-Comique. He added that her impersonation was most interesting.

To me one of the most truly fascinating of Miss Garden's characterizations was her Fanny Legrand in Daudet's play, made into an opera by Massenet. *Sapho*, as a lyric drama, did not have a success in New York. I think only three performances were given at the Manhattan Opera House. The professional writers, with one exception, found nothing to praise in Miss Garden's remarkable impersonation of Fanny. And yet, as I have said, it seemed to me one of the most moving of her interpretations. In the opening scenes she

was the trollop, no less, that Fanny was. The pregnant line of the first act: *Artiste? . . . Non. . . . Tant mieux. J'ai contre tout artiste une haine implacable!* was spoken in a manner which bared the woman's heart to the sophisticated. The scene in which she sang the song of the *Magali* (the Provençal melody which Mistral immortalized in a poem, which Gounod introduced into *Mireille*, and which found its way, inexplicably, into the ballet of Berlioz's *Les Troyens à Carthage*), playing her own accompaniment, to Jean, was really too wonderful a caricature of the harlot. Abel Faivre and Paul Guillaume have done no better. The scene in which Fanny reviles her former associates for telling Jean the truth about her past life was revolting in its realism.

If Miss Garden spared no details in making us acquainted with Fanny's vulgarity, she was equally fair to her in other respects. She seemed to be continually guiding the spectator with comment something like this: "See how this woman can suffer, and she is a woman, like any other woman." How small the means, the effect considered, by which she produced the pathos of the last scene. At the one performance I saw half the people in the audience were in tears. There was

a dismaying display of handkerchiefs. Sapho sat in the window, smoking a cigarette, surveying the room in which she had been happy with Jean, and preparing to say good-by. In the earlier scenes her cigarette had aided her in making vulgar gestures. Now she relied on it to tell the pitiful tale of the woman's loneliness. How she clung to that cigarette, how she sipped comfort from it, and how tiny it was! Mary Garden's Sapho, which may never be seen on the stage again (Massenet's music is perhaps his weakest effort), was an extraordinary piece of stage art. That alone would have proclaimed her an interpreter of genius.

George Moore, somewhere, evolves a fantastic theory that a writer's name may have determined his talent: "Dickens — a mean name, a name without atmosphere, a black out-of-elbows, backstairs name, a name good enough for loud comedy and louder pathos. John Milton — a splendid name for a Puritan poet. Algernon Charles Swinburne — only a name for a reed through which every wind blows music. . . . Now it is a fact that we find no fine names among novelists. We find only colourless names, dry-as-dust names, or vulgar names, round names like pot-hats, those names like mackintoshes, names that are squashy as goloshes. We have charged Scott with a lack

MARY GARDEN AS FANNY LEGRAND

from a photograph by Mishkin (1909)

of personal passion, but could personal passion dwell in such a jog-trot name — a round-faced name, a snub-nosed, spectacled, pot-bellied name, a placid, beneficent, worthy old bachelor name, a name that evokes all conventional ideas and formulas, a Grub Street name, a nerveless name, an arm-chair name, an old oak and Abbotsford name? And Thackeray's name is a poor one — the syllables clatter like plates. 'We shall want the carriage at half-past two, Thackeray.' Dickens is surely a name for a page boy. George Eliot's real name, Marian Evans, is a chaw-bacon, thick-loined name." So far as I know Mr. Moore has not expanded his theory to include a discussion of acrobats, revivalists, necromancers, free versifiers, camel drivers, paying tellers, painters, pugilists, architects, and opera singers. Many of the latter have taken no chances with their own names. Both Pauline and Maria Garcia adopted the names of their husbands. Garcia possibly suggests a warrior, but do Malibran and Viardot make us think of music? Nellie Melba's name evokes an image of a cold marble slab but if she had retained her original name of Mitchell it would have been no better . . . Marcella Sembrich, a name made famous by the genius and indefatigable labour of its bearer, surely not a good

name for an operatic soprano. Her own name, Kochanska, sounds Polish and patriotic . . . Luisa Tetrazzini, a silly, fussy name . . . Emma Calvé . . . Since *Madame Bovary* the name Emma suggests a solid *bourgeois* foundation, a country family. . . . Emma Eames, a chilly name . . . a wind from the East! Was it Philip Hale who remarked that she sang *Who is Sylvia?* as if the woman were not on her calling list? . . . Lillian Nordica, an evasion. Lillian Norton is a sturdy work-a-day name, suggesting a premonition of a thousand piano rehearsals for Isolde . . . Johanna Gadski, a coughing raucous name . . . Geraldine Farrar, tomboyish and impertinent, Melrose with a French sauce . . . Edyth Walker, a militant suffragette name . . . Surely Lucrezia Bori and Maria Barrientos are ill-made names for singers . . . Adelina Patti — a patty-cake, patty-cake, baker's man, sort of a name . . . Alboni, strong-hearted . . . Scalchi . . . ugh! Further evidence could be brought forward to prove that singers succeed in spite of their names rather than because of them . . . until we reach the name of Mary Garden. . . . The subtle fragrance of this name has found its way into many hearts. Since Nell Gwyn no such scented cognomen, redolent of cuckoo's boots, London pride, blood-red poppies,

purple fox-gloves, lemon stocks, and vermillion zinnias, has blown its delicate odour across our scene. . . . Delightful and adorable Mary Garden, the fragile Thais, pathetic Jean . . . unforgettable Mélisande. . . .

October 10, 1916.

Feodor Chaliapine

"Do I contradict myself?
Very well, then, I contradict myself;"

Walt Whitman.

Feodor Chaliapine

FEODOR CHALIAPINE, the Russian bass singer, appeared in New York at the Metropolitan Opera House, then under the direction of Heinrich Conried, during the season of 1907-08. He made his American début on Wednesday evening, November 20, 1907, when he impersonated the title part of Boito's opera, *Mefistofele.* He was heard here altogether seven times in this rôle; six times as Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia;* three times as Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust;* three times as Leporello in *Don Giovanni;* and at several Sunday night concerts. He also appeared with the Metropolitan Opera Company in Philadelphia, and possibly elsewhere.

I first met this remarkable artist in the dining-room of the Hotel Savoy on a rainy Sunday afternoon, soon after his arrival in America. His personality made a profound impression on me, as may be gathered from some lines from an article I wrote which appeared the next morning in the "New York Times": "The newest operatic acquisition to arrive in New York is neither a prima donna soprano, nor an Italian tenor with a high C, but a big, broad-shouldered boy, with a kindly smile and a deep bass voice, . . . thirty-

four years old. . . . 'I spik English,' were his first words. 'How do you do? et puis good-by, et puis I drrrink, you drrink, he drrrrinks, et puis I love you!' . . . Mr. Chaliapine looked like a great big boy, a sophomore in college, who played football." (Pitts Sanborn soon afterwards felicitously referred to him as *ce doux géant*, a name often applied to Turgeniev.)

I have given the extent of the Russian's English vocabulary at this time, and I soon discovered that it was not accident which had caused him first to learn to conjugate the verb "to drink"; another English verb he learned very quickly was "to eat." Some time later, after his New York début, I sought him out again to urge him to give a synopsis of his original conception for a performance of Gounod's *Faust*. The interview which ensued was the longest I have ever had with any one. It began at eleven o'clock in the morning and lasted until a like hour in the evening,— it might have lasted much longer,— and during this whole time we sat at table in Mr. Chaliapine's own chamber at the Brevoort, whither he had repaired to escape steam heat, while he consumed vast quantities of food and drink. I remember a detail of six plates of onion soup. I have never seen any one else eat so much or so

continuously, or with so little lethargic effect. Indeed, intemperance seemed only to make him more light-hearted, ebullient, and Brobdingnagian. Late in the afternoon he placed his own record of the *Marseillaise* in the victrola, and then amused himself (and me) by singing the song in unison with the record, in an attempt to drown out the mechanical sound. He succeeded. The effect in this moderately small hotel room can only be faintly conceived.

Exuberant is the word which best describes Chaliapine off the stage. I remember another occasion a year later when I met him, just returned from South America, on the Boulevard in Paris. He grasped my hand warmly and begged me to come to see his zoo. He had, in fact, transformed the *salle de bain* in his suite at the Grand Hotel into a menagerie. There were two monkeys, a cockatoo, and many other birds of brilliant plumage, while two large alligators dozed in the tub.

My second interview with this singer took place a day or so before he returned to Europe. He had been roughly handled by the New York critics, treatment, it is said, which met with the approval of Heinrich Conried, who had no desire to retain in his company a bass who demanded six-

teen hundred dollars a night, a high salary for a soprano or a tenor. Stung by this defeat — entirely imaginary, by the way, as his audiences here were as large and enthusiastic as they are anywhere — the only one, in fact, which he has suffered in his career up to date, Chaliapine was extremely frank in his attitude. My interview, published on the first page of the "New York Times," created a small sensation in operatic circles. The meat of it follows. Chaliapine is speaking:

"Criticism in New York is not profound. It is the most difficult thing in the world to be a good critical writer. I am a singer, but the critic has no right to regard me merely as a singer. He must observe my acting, my make-up, everything. And he must understand and know about these things.

"Opera is not a fixed art. It is not like music, poetry, sculpture, painting, or architecture, but a combination of all of these. And the critic who goes to the opera should have studied all these arts. While a study of these arts is essential, there is something else that the critic cannot get by study, and that is the soul to understand. That he must be born with.

"I am not a professional critic, but I could be.

I have associated with musicians, painters, and writers, and I know something of all these arts. As a consequence when I read a criticism, I see immediately what is true and what is false. Very often I think a man's tongue is his worst enemy. However, sometimes a man keeps quiet to conceal his mental weakness. We have a Russian proverb which says, 'Keep quiet; don't tease the geese.' You can't judge of a man's intelligence until he begins to talk or write.

"I have been sometimes adversely criticized during the course of my artistic life. The most profound of these criticisms have taught me to correct my faults. But I have learned nothing from the criticisms I have received in New York. After searching my inner consciousness, I find they are not based on a true understanding of my artistic purposes. For instance, the critics found my Don Basilio a dirty, repulsive creature. One man even said that I was offensive to another singer on the stage! Don Basilio is a Spanish priest; it is a type I know well. He is not like the modern American priest, clean and well-groomed; he is dirty and unkempt; he is a beast, and that is what I make him, a comic beast, but the critics would prefer a softer version. . . . It is unfair, indeed, to judge me at all on the parts I

have sung here, outside of Mefistofele, for most of my best rôles are in Russian operas, which are not in the répertoire of the Metropolitan Opera House.

"The contemporary direction of this theatre believes in tradition. It is afraid of anything new. There is no movement. It has not the courage to produce novelties, and the artists are prevented from giving original conceptions of old rôles.

"New York is a vast seething inferno of business. Nothing but business! The men are so tired when they get through work that they want recreation and sleep. They don't want to study. They don't want to be thrilled or aroused. They are content to listen forever to *Faust* and *Lucia*.

"In Europe it is different. There you will find the desire for novelty in the theatre. There is a keen interest in the production of a new work. It is all right to enjoy the old things, but one should see life. The audience at the Metropolitan Opera House reminds me of a family that lives in the country and won't travel. It is satisfied with the same view of the same garden forever. . . ."

Feodor Ivanovich Chaliapine was born February 13 (February 1, old style), 1873, in Kazan; he is of peasant descent. It is said that he is al-

most entirely self-educated, both musically and intellectually. He worked for a time in a shoemaker's shop, sang in the archbishop's choir and, at the age of seventeen, joined a local operetta company. He seems to have had difficulty in collecting a salary from this latter organization, and often worked as a railway porter in order to keep alive. Later he joined a travelling theatrical troupe, which visited the Caucasus. In 1892, Oussatov, a singer, heard Chaliapine in Tiflis, gave him some lessons, and got him an engagement.

He made his début in opera in Glinka's *A Life for the Czar* (according to Mrs. Newmarch; my notes tell me that it was Gounod's *Faust*). He sang at the Summer and Panaevsky theatres in Petrograd in 1894; and the following year he was engaged at the Maryinsky Theatre, but the directors did not seem to realize that they had captured one of the great figures of the contemporary lyric stage, and he was not permitted to sing very often. In 1896, Mamantov, lawyer and millionaire, paid the fine which released the bass from the Imperial Opera House, and invited him to join the Private Opera Company in Moscow, where Chaliapine immediately proved his worth. He became the idol of the public, and it was not

unusual for those who admired striking impersonations on the stage to journey from Petrograd to see and hear him. In 1899 he was engaged to sing at the Imperial Opera in Moscow at sixty thousand roubles a year. Since then he has appeared in various European capitals, and in North and South America. He has sung in Milan, Paris, London, Monte Carlo, and Buenos Aires. During a visit to Milan he married, and at the time of his New York engagement his family included five children. The number may have increased.

Chaliapine's répertoire is extensive but, on the whole, it is a strange répertoire to western Europe and America, consisting, as it does, almost entirely of Russian operas. In Milan, New York, and Monte Carlo, where he has appeared with Italian and French companies, his most famous rôle is Mefistofele. Leporello he sang for the first time in New York. Basilio and Méphistophélès in *Faust* he has probably enacted as often in Russia as elsewhere. He " created " the title part of Massenet's *Don Quichotte* at Monte Carlo (Vanni Marcoux sang the rôle later in Paris). With the Russian Opera Company, organized in connection with the Russian Ballet by Serge de Diaghilew, Chaliapine has sung in London, Paris, and other

European capitals in Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunow* and *Khovanchina*, Rimsky-Korsakow's *Ivan the Terrible* (originally called *The Maid of Pskov)*, and Borodine's *Prince Igor*, in which he appeared both as Prince Galitzky and as the Tartar Chieftain. His répertoire further includes Rubinstein's *Demon*, Rimsky-Korsakow's *Mozart and Salieri* (the rôle of Salieri), Glinka's *A Life for the Czar*, Dargomijsky's *The Roussalka*, Rachmaninow's *Aleko*, and Gretchaninow's *Dobrynia Nikitich*. This list is by no means complete.

I first saw Chaliapine on the stage in New York, where his original ideas and tremendously vital personality ran counter to every tradition of the Metropolitan Opera House. The professional writers about the opera, as a whole, would have none of him. Even his magnificently pictorial Mefistofele was condemned, and I think Pitts Sanborn was the only man in a critic's chair — I was a reporter at this period and had no opportunity for expressing my opinions in print — who appreciated his Basilio at its true value, and *Il Barbiere* is Sanborn's favourite opera. His account of the proceedings makes good reading at this date. I quote from the "New York Globe," December 13, 1907:

"The performance that was in open defiance of

traditions, that was glaringly and recklessly unorthodox, that set at naught the accepted canons of good taste, but which justified itself by its overwhelming and all-conquering good humour, was the Basilio of Mr. Chaliapine. With his great natural stature increased by art to Brobdingnagian proportions, a face that had gazed on the vodka at its blackest, and a cassock that may be seen but not described, he presented a figure that might have been imagined by the English Swift or the French Rabelais. It was no voice or singing that made the audience re-demand the 'Calumny Song.' It was the compelling drollery of those comedy hands. You may be assured, persuaded, convinced that you want your Rossini straight or not at all. But when you see the Chaliapine Basilio you'll do as the rest do — roar. It is as sensational in its way as the Chaliapine Mephisto."

It was hard to reconcile Chaliapine's conception of Méphistophélès with the Gounod music, and I do not think the Russian himself had any illusions about his performance of *Leporello*. It was not his type of part, and he was as good in it, probably, as Olive Fremstad would be as Nedda. Even great artists have their limitations, perhaps more of them than the lesser people. But his

Mefistofele, to my way of thinking,— and the anxious reader who has not seen this impersonation may be assured that I am far from being alone in it,— was and is a masterpiece of stagecraft. However, opinions differ. Under the alluring title, "Devils Polite and Rude," W. J. Henderson, in the "New York Sun," Sunday, November 24, 1907, after Chaliapine's first appearance here in Boito's opera, took his fling at the Russian bass (was it Mr. Henderson or another who later referred to Chaliapine as "a cossack with a cold"?): "He makes of the fiend a demoniac personage, a seething cauldron of rabid passions. He is continually snarling and barking. He poses in writhing attitudes of agonized impotence. He strides and gestures, grimaces and roars. All this appears to superficial observers to be tremendously dramatic. And it is, as noted, not without its significance. Perhaps it may be only a personal fancy, yet the present writer much prefers a devil who is a gentleman. . . . But one thing more remains to be said about the first display of Mr. Chaliapine's powers. How long did he study the art of singing? Surely not many years. Such an uneven and uncertain emission of tone is seldom heard even on the Metropolitan Opera House stage,

where there is a wondrous quantity of poorly grounded singing. The splendid song, *Son lo Spirito Che Nega*, was not sung at all in the strict interpretation of the word. It was delivered, to be sure, but in a rough and barbaric style. Some of the tones disappeared somewhere in the rear spaces of the basso's capacious throat, while others were projected into the auditorium like stones from a catapult. There was much strenuosity and little art in the performance. And it was much the same with the rest of the singing of the rôle."

Chaliapine calls himself "the enemy of tradition." When he was singing at the Opera in Petrograd in 1896 he found that every detail of every characterization was prescribed. He was directed to make his entrances in a certain way; he was ordered to stand in a certain place on the stage. Whenever he attempted an innovation the stage director said, "Don't do that." Young singer though he was, he rebelled and asked, "Why not?" And the reply always came, "You must follow the tradition of the part. Monsieur Chose and Signor Cosi have always done thus and so, and you must do likewise." "But I feel differently about the rôle," protested the bass. However, it was not until he went to Moscow that he

was permitted to break with tradition. From that time on he began to elaborate his characterizations, assisted, he admits, by Russian painters who gave him his first ideas about costumes and make-up. He once told me that his interpretation of a part was never twice the same. He does not study his rôles in solitude, poring over a score, as many artists do. Rather, ideas come to him when he eats or drinks, or even when he is on the stage. He depends to an unsafe degree — unsafe for other singers who may be misled by his success — on inspiration to carry him through, once he begins to sing. "When I sing a character I am that character; I am no longer Chaliapine. So whatever I do must be in keeping with what the character would do." This is true to so great an extent that you may take it for granted, when you see Chaliapine in a new rôle, that he will envelop the character with atmosphere from his first entrance, perhaps even without the aid of a single gesture. His entrance on horseback in *Ivan the Terrible* is a case in point. Before he has sung a note he has projected the personality of the cruel czar into the auditorium.

"As an actor," writes Mrs. Newmarch in "The Russian Opera," "his greatest quality appears to me to be his extraordinary gift of identification

with the character he is representing. Shaliapin (so does Mrs. Newmarch phonetically transpose his name into Roman letters) does not merely throw himself into the part, to use a phrase commonly applied to the histrionic art. He seems to disappear, to empty himself of all personality, that Boris Godounov or Ivan the Terrible may be reincarnated for us. While working out his own conception of a part, unmoved by convention or opinion, Shaliapin neglects no accessory study that can heighten the realism of his interpretation. It is impossible to see him as Ivan the Terrible, or Boris, without realizing that he is steeped in the history of those periods, which live again at his will. In the same way he has studied the masterpieces of Russian art to good purpose, as all must agree who have compared the scene of Ivan's frenzied grief over the corpse of Olga, in the last scene of Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, with Repin's terrible picture of the Tsar, clasping in his arms the body of the son whom he has just killed in a fit of insane anger. The agonizing remorse and piteous senile grief have been transformed from Repin's canvas to Shaliapin's living picture, without the revolting suggestion of the shambles which mars the painter's work. Sometimes, too, Shaliapin will take a hint from the living model. His dignified make-up

as the Old Believer Dositheus, in Moussorgsky's *Khovanstchina*, owes not a little to the personality of Vladimir Stassov."

Chaliapine, it seems to me, has realized more completely than any other contemporary singer the opportunities afforded for the presentation of character on the lyric stage. In costume, make-up, gesture, the simulation of emotion, he is a consummate and painstaking artist. As I have suggested, he has limitations. Who, indeed, has not? Grandeur, nobility, impressiveness, and, by inversion, sordidness, bestiality, and awkward ugliness fall easily within his ken. The murder-haunted Boris Godunow is perhaps his most overpowering creation. From first to last it is a masterpiece of scenic art; those who have seen him in this part will not be satisfied with substitutes. His Ivan is almost equally great. His Dositheus, head of the Old Believers in *Khovanchina*, is a sincere and effective characterization along entirely different lines. Although this character, in a sense, dominates Moussorgsky's great opera, there is little opportunity for the display of histrionism which Boris presents to the singing actor. By almost insignificant details of make-up and gesture the bass creates before your eyes a living, breathing man, a man of fire and faith. No one would

recognize in this kind old creature, terrible, to be sure, in his stern piety, the nude Mefistofele surveying the pranks of the motley rabble in the Brocken scene of Boito's opera, a flamboyant exposure of personality to be compared with Mary Garden's Thais, Act I.

As the Tartar chieftain in *Prince Igor*, he has but few lines to sing, but his gestures during the performance of the ballet, which he has arranged for his guest, in fact his actions throughout the single act in which this character appears, are stamped on the memory as definitely as a figure in a Persian miniature. And the noble scorn with which, as Prince Galitzky, he bows to the stirrup of Prince Igor at the close of the prologue to this opera, still remains a fixed picture in my mind. There is also the pathetic Don Quichotte of Massenet's poorest opera. All great portraits these, to which I must add the funny, dirty, expectorating Spanish priest of *Il Barbiere*.

Chaliapine is the possessor of a noble voice which sometimes he uses by main strength. He has never learned to sing, in the conventional meaning of the phrase. He must have been singing for some time before he studied at all, and at Tiflis he does not seem to have spent many months on his voice. In the circumstances it is an extremely

FEODOR CHALIAPINE AS MEFISTOFELE

tractable organ, at least always capable of doing his bidding, dramatically speaking. Indeed, there are many who consider him a great artist in his manipulation of it. Mrs. Newmarch quotes Herbert Heyner on this point:

"His diction floats on a beautiful cantilena, particularly in his *mezzo-voce* singing, which — though one would hardly expect it from a singer endowed with such a noble bass voice — is one of the most telling features of his performance. There is never any striving after vocal effects, and his voice is always subservient to the words. . . . The atmosphere and tone-colour which Shaliapin imparts to his singing are of such remarkable quality that one feels his interpretation of Schubert's *Doppelgänger* must of necessity be a thing of genius, unapproachable by other contemporary singers. . . . his method is based upon a thoroughly sound breath control, which produces such splendid *cantabile* results. Every student should listen to this great singer, and profit by his art."

My intention in placing before the eyes of my readers such contradictory accounts as may be found in this article has not been altogether ingenuous. The fact of the matter is that opinions differ on every matter of art, and on no point are

they so various as on that which refers to interpretation. It may further be urged that the personality of Chaliapine is so marked and his method so direct that the variations of opinion are naturally expressed in somewhat violent language.

For those, accustomed to the occidental operatic répertoire, who find it hard to understand how a bass could acquire such prominence, it may be explained that deep voices are both common and very popular in Russia. They may be heard in any Greek church, sustaining organ points a full octave below the notes to which our basses descend with trepidation. As a consequence, many of the Russian operas contain bass rôles of the first importance. In both of Moussorgsky's familiar operas, for example, the leading part is destined for a bass voice.

July 18, 1916.

Mariette Mazarin

Mariette Mazarin

SOMETIMES the cause of an intense impression in the theatre apparently disappears, leaving "not a rack behind," beyond the trenchant memory of a few precious moments, inclining one to the belief that the whole adventure has been a dream, a particularly vivid dream, and that the characters therein have returned to such places in space as are assigned to dream personages by the makers of men. This reflection comes to me as, sitting before my typewriter, I attempt to recapture the spirit of the performances of Richard Strauss's music drama *Elektra* at Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House in New York. The work remains, if not in the répertoire of any opera house in my vicinity, at least deeply imbedded in my eardrum and, if need be, at any time I can pore again over the score, which is always near at hand. But of the whereabouts of Mariette Mazarin, the remarkable artist who contributed her genius to the interpretation of the crazed Greek princess, I know nothing. As she came to us unheralded, so she went away, after we who had seen her had enshrined her, tardily to be sure, in that small, slow-growing circle of those who have achieved eminence on the lyric stage.

Before the beginning of the opera season of 1909-10, Mariette Mazarin was not even a name in New York. Even during a good part of that season she was recognized only as an able routine singer. She made her début here in *Aida* and she sang Carmen and Louise without creating a furore, almost, indeed, without arousing attention of any kind, good or bad criticism. Had there been no production of *Elektra* she would have passed into that long list of forgotten singers who appear here in leading rôles for a few months or a few years and who, when their time is up, vanish, never to be regretted, extolled, or recalled in the memory again. For the disclosure of Mme. Mazarin's true powers an unusual vehicle was required. *Elektra* gave her her opportunity, and proved her one of the exceptional artists of the stage.

I do not know many of the facts of Mariette Mazarin's career. She studied at the Paris Conservatoire; Leloir, of the Comédie Française, was her professor of acting. She made her début at the Paris Opéra as Aida; later she sang Louise and Carmen at the Opéra-Comique. After that she seems to have been a leading figure at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, where she appeared in *Alceste*, *Armide*, *Iphigénie en Tauride* and *Iphigénie en Aulide*, even *Orphée*, the great

Gluck répertoire. She has also sung Salome, the three Brünnhildes, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, in Berlioz's *Prise de Troie*, *La Damnation de Faust*, *Les Huguenots*, *Grisélidis*, *Thais*, *Il Trovatore*, *Tosca*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Hérodiade*, *Le Cid*, and *Salammbô*. She has been heard at Nice, and probably on many another provincial French stage. At one time she was the wife of Léon Rothier, the French bass, who has been a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company for several seasons.

Away from the theatre I remember her as a tall woman, rather awkward, but quick in gesture. Her hair was dark, and her eyes were dark and piercing. Her face was all angles; her features were sharp, and when conversing with her one could not but be struck with a certain eerie quality which seemed to give mystic colour to her expression. She was badly dressed, both from an æsthetic and a fashionable point of view. In a group of women you would pick her out to be a doctor, a lawyer, an *intellectuelle*. When I talked with her, impression followed impression — always I felt her intelligence, the play of her intellect upon the surfaces of her art, but always, too, I felt how narrow a chance had cast her lot upon the stage, how she easily might have been something

else than a singing actress, how magnificently accidental her career was!

She was, it would seem, an unusually gifted musician — at least for a singer,— with a physique and a nervous energy which enabled her to perform miracles. For instance, on one occasion she astonished even Oscar Hammerstein by replacing Lina Cavalieri as Salomé in *Hérodiade*, a rôle she had not previously sung for five years, at an hour's notice on the evening of an afternoon on which she had appeared as Elektra. On another occasion, when Mary Garden was ill she sang Louise with only a short forewarning. She told me that she had learned the music of Elektra between January 1, 1910, and the night of the first performance, January 31. She also told me that without any special effort on her part she had assimilated the music of the other two important feminine rôles in the opera, Chrysothemis and Klytæmnestra, and was quite prepared to sing them. Mme. Mazarin's vocal organ, it must be admitted, was not of a very pleasant quality at all times, although she employed it with variety and usually with taste. There was a good deal of subtle charm in her middle voice, but her upper voice was shrill and sometimes, when emitted forcefully, became in effect a shriek. Faulty intonation often

played havoc with her musical interpretation, but do we not read that the great Mme. Pasta seldom sang an opera through without many similar slips from the pitch? *Aida*, of course, displayed the worst side of her talents. Her Carmen, it seemed to me, was in some ways a very remarkable performance; she appeared, in this rôle, to be possessed by a certain *diablerie*, a power of evil, which distinguished her from other Carmens, but this characterization created little comment or interest in New York. In *Louise*, especially in the third act, she betrayed an enmity for the pitch, but in the last act she was magnificent as an actress. In Santuzza she exploited her capacity for unreined intensity of expression. I have never seen her as Salome (in Richard Strauss's opera; her Massenetic Salomé was disclosed to us in New York), but I have a photograph of her in the rôle which might serve as an illustration for the "Méphistophéla" of Catulle Mendès. I can imagine no more sinister and depraved an expression, combined with such potent sexual attraction. It is a remarkable photograph, evoking as it does a succession of lustful ladies, and it is quite unpublishable. If she carried these qualities into her performance of the work, and there is every reason to believe that she did, the even-

ings on which she sang Salome must have been very terrible for her auditors, hours in which the Aristotle theory of Katharsis must have been amply proven.

Elektra was well advertised in New York. Oscar Hammerstein is as able a showman as the late P. T. Barnum, and he has devoted his talents to higher aims. Without his co-operation, I think it is likely that America would now be a trifle above Australia in its operatic experience. It is from Oscar Hammerstein that New York learned that all the great singers of the world were not singing at the Metropolitan Opera House, a matter which had been considered axiomatic before the redoubtable Oscar introduced us to Alessandro Bonci, Maurice Renaud, Charles Dalmores, Mary Garden, Luisa Tetrazzini, and others. With his productions of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Louise*, *Thais*, and other works new to us, he spurred the rival house to an activity which has been maintained ever since to a greater or less degree. New operas are now the order of the day — even with the Chicago and the Boston companies — rather than the exception. And without this impresario's courage and determination I do not think New York would have heard *Elektra*, at least not before its uncorked essence had quite disappeared.

Lover of opera that he indubitably is, Oscar Hammerstein is by nature a showman, and he understands the psychology of the mob. Looking about for a sensation to stir the slow pulse of the New York opera-goer, he saw nothing on the horizon more likely to effect his purpose than *Elektra*. *Salome*, spurned by the Metropolitan Opera Company, had been taken to his heart the year before and, with Mary Garden's valuable assistance, he had found the biblical jade extremely efficacious in drawing shekels to his doors. He hoped to accomplish similar results with *Elektra*. . . .

One of the penalties an inventor of harmonies pays is that his inventions become shopworn. A certain terrible atmosphere, a suggestion of vague dread, of horror, of rank incest, of vile murder, of sordid shame, was conveyed in *Elektra* by Richard Strauss through the adroit use of what we call discords, for want of a better name. Discord at one time was defined as a combination of sounds that would eternally affront the musical ear. We know better now. Discord is simply the word to describe a never-before or seldom-used chord. Such a juxtaposition of notes naturally startles when it is first heard, but it is a mistake to presume that the effect is unpleasant, even in the beginning.

Now it was by the use of sounds cunningly contrived to displease the ear that Strauss built up his atmosphere of ugliness in *Elektra*. When it was first performed, the scenes in which the half-mad Greek girl stalked the palace courtyard, and the queen with the blood-stained hands related her dreams, literally reeked with musical frightfulness. I have never seen or heard another music drama which so completely bowled over its first audiences, whether they were street-car conductors or musical pedants. These scenes even inspired a famous passage in "Jean-Christophe" (I quote from the translation of Gilbert Cannon): "Agamemnon was neurasthenic and Achilles impotent; they lamented their condition at length and, naturally, their outcries produced no change. The energy of the drama was concentrated in the rôle of Iphigenia — a nervous, hysterical, and pedantic Iphigenia, who lectured the hero, declaimed furiously, laid bare for the audience her Nietzschian pessimism and, glutted with death, cut her throat, shrieking with laughter."

But will *Elektra* have the same effect on future audiences? I do not think so. Its terror has, in a measure, been dissipated. Schoenberg, Strawinsky, and Ornstein have employed its discords — and many newer ones — for pleasanter purposes,

and our ears are becoming accustomed to these assaults on the casual harmony of our forefathers. *Elektra* will retain its place as a forerunner, and inevitably it will eventually be considered the most important of Strauss's operatic works, but it can never be listened to again in that same spirit of horror and repentance, with that feeling of utter repugnance, which it found easy to awaken in 1910. Perhaps all of us were a little better for the experience.

An attendant at the opening ceremonies in New York can scarcely forget them. Cast under the spell by the early entrance of Elektra, wild-eyed and menacing, across the terrace of the courtyard of Agamemnon's palace, he must have remained with staring eyes and wide-flung ears, straining for the remainder of the evening to catch the message of this tale of triumphant and utterly holy revenge. The key of von Hofmannsthal's fine play was lost to some reviewers, as it was to Romain Rolland in the passage quoted above, who only saw in the drama a perversion of the Greek idea of Nemesis. That there was something very much finer in the theme, it was left for Bernard Shaw to discover. To him *Elektra* expressed the regeneration of a race, the destruction of vice, ignorance, and poverty. The play was replete in

his mind with sociological and political implications, and, as his views in the matter exactly coincide with my own, I cannot do better than to quote a few lines from them, including, as they do, his interesting prophecies regarding the possibility of war between England and Germany, unfortunately unfulfilled. Strauss could not quite prevent the war with his *Elektra*. Here is the passage:

"What Hofmannsthal and Strauss have done is to take Klytæmnestra and Ægisthus, and by identifying them with everything evil and cruel, with all that needs must hate the highest when it sees it, with hideous domination and coercion of the higher by the baser, with the murderous rage in which the lust for a lifetime of orgiastic pleasure turns on its slaves in the torture of its disappointment, and the sleepless horror and misery of its neurasthenia, to so rouse in us an overwhelming flood of wrath against it and a ruthless resolution to destroy it that Elektra's vengeance becomes holy to us, and we come to understand how even the gentlest of us could wield the ax of Orestes or twist our firm fingers in the black hair of Klytæmnestra to drag back her head and leave her throat open to the stroke.

"This was a task hardly possible to an ancient Greek, and not easy even for us, who are face to

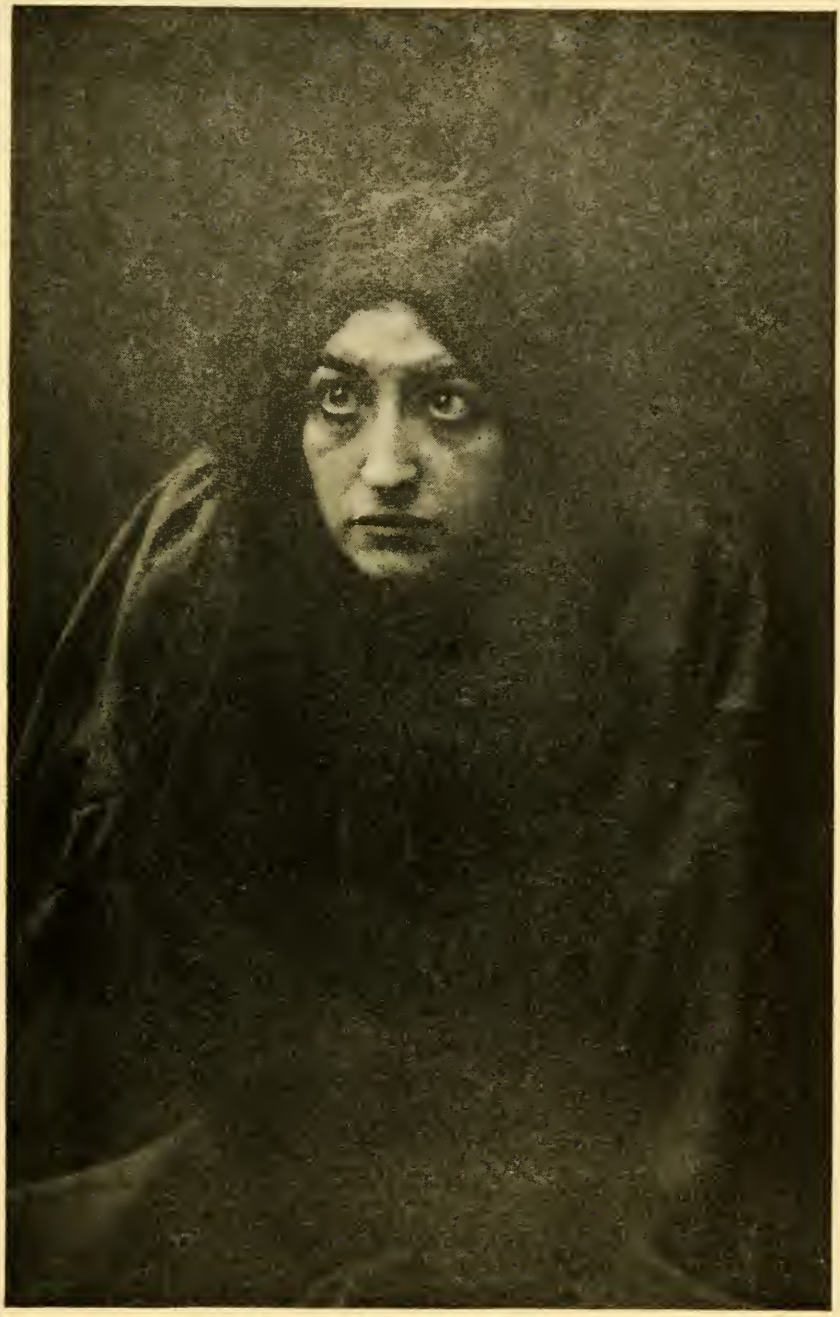
face with the America of the Thaw case and the European plutocracy of which that case was only a trifling symptom, and that is the task that Hofmannsthal and Strauss have achieved. Not even in the third scene of *Das Rheingold* or in the Klingsor scene in *Parsifal* is there such an atmosphere of malignant, cancerous evil as we get here and that the power with which it is done is not the power of the evil itself, but of the passion that detests and must and finally can destroy that evil is what makes the work great and makes us rejoice in its horror.

"Whoever understands this, however vaguely, will understand Strauss's music. I have often said, when asked to state the case against the fools and the money changers who are trying to drive us into a war with Germany, that the case consists of the single word 'Beethoven.' To-day I should say with equal confidence 'Strauss.' In this music drama Strauss has done for us with utterly satisfying force what all the noblest powers of life within us are clamouring to have said in protest against and defiance of the omnipresent villainies of our civilization, and this is the highest achievement of the highest art."

Mme. Mazarin was the torch-bearer in New York of this magnificent creation. She is, indeed,

the only singer who has ever appeared in the rôle in America, and I have never heard *Elektra* in Europe. However, those who have seen other interpreters of the rôle assure me that Mme. Mazarin so far outdistanced them as to make comparison impossible. This, in spite of the fact that *Elektra* in French necessarily lost something of its crude force, and through its mild-mannered conductor at the Manhattan Opera House, who seemed afraid to make a noise, a great deal more. I did not make any notes about this performance at the time, but now, seven years later, it is very vivid to me, an unforgettable impression. Of how many nights in the theatre can I say as much?

Diabolical ecstasy was the keynote of Mme. Mazarin's interpretation, gradually developing into utter frenzy. She afterwards assured me that a visit to a madhouse had given her the inspiration for the gestures and steps of Elektra in the terrible dance in which she celebrates Orestes's bloody but righteous deed. The plane of hysteria upon which this singer carried her heroine by her pure nervous force, indeed reduced many of us in the audience to a similar state. The conventional operatic mode was abandoned; even the grand manner of the theatre was flung aside; with a wide sweep of the imagination, the singer cast the mem-



MARIETTE MAZARIN AS ELEKTRA

rom a photograph by Mishkin (1910)

ory of all such baggage from her, and proceeded along vividly direct lines to make her impression.

The first glimpse of the half-mad princess, creeping dirty and ragged, to the accompaniment of cracking whips, across the terraced courtyard of the palace, was indeed not calculated to stir tears in the eyes. The picture was vile and repugnant; so perhaps was the appeal to the sister whose only wish was to bear a child, but Mme. Mazarin had her design; her measurements were well taken. In the wild cry to Agamemnon, the dignity and pathos of the character were established, and these qualities were later emphasized in the scene of her meeting with Orestes, beautiful pages in von Hofmannsthal's play and Strauss's score. And in the dance of the poor demented creature at the close the full beauty and power and meaning of the drama were disclosed in a few incisive strokes. Elektra's mind had indeed given way under the strain of her sufferings, brought about by her long waiting for vengeance, but it had given way under the light of holy triumph. Such indeed were the fundamentals of this tremendously moving characterization, a characterization which one must place, perforce, in that great memory gallery where hang the Mélisande of

Mary Garden, the Isolde of Olive Fremstad, and the Boris Godunow of Feodor Chaliapine.

It was not alone in her acting that Mme. Mazarin walked on the heights. I know of no other singer with the force or vocal equipment for this difficult rôle. At the time this music drama was produced its intervals were considered in the guise of unrelated notes. It was the cry that the voice parts were written without reference to the orchestral score, and that these wandered up and down without regard for the limitations of a singer. Since *Elektra* was first performed we have travelled far, and now that we have heard *The Nightingale* of Strawinsky, for instance, perusal of Strauss's score shows us a perfectly ordered and understandable series of notes. Even now, however, there are few of our singers who could cope with the music of *Elektra* without devoting a good many months to its study, and more time to the physical exercise needful to equip one with the force necessary to carry through the undertaking. Mme. Mazarin never faltered. She sang the notes with astonishing accuracy; nay, more, with potent vocal colour. Never did the orchestral flood o'ertop her flow of sound. With consummate skill she realized the composer's intentions as completely as she had those of the poet.

Those who were present at the first American performance of this work will long bear the occasion in mind. The outburst of applause which followed the close of the play was almost hysterical in quality, and after a number of recalls Mme. Mazarin fainted before the curtain. Many in the audience remained long enough to receive the reassuring news that she had recovered. As a reporter of musical doings on the "New York Times," I sought information as to her condition at the dressing-room of the artist. Somewhere between the auditorium and the stage, in a passageway, I encountered Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who, a short time before, had appeared at the Garden Theatre in Arthur Symons's translation of von Hofmannsthal's drama. Although we had never met before, in the excitement of the moment we became engaged in conversation, and I volunteered to escort her to Mme. Mazarin's room, where she attempted to express her enthusiasm. Then I asked her if she would like to meet Mr. Hammerstein, and she replied that it was her great desire at this moment to meet the impresario and to thank him for the indelible impression this evening in the theatre had given her. I led her to the corner of the stage where he sat, in his high hat, smoking his cigar, and I presented her to him.

"But Mrs. Campbell was introduced to me only three minutes ago," he said. She stammered her acknowledgment of the fact. "It's true," she said. "I have been so completely carried out of myself that I had forgotten!"

August 22, 1916.

Yvette Guilbert

"She sings of life, and mirth and all that moves
Man's fancy in the carnival of loves;
And a chill shiver takes me as she sings
The pity of unpitied human things."

Arthur Symons.

Yvette Guilbert

THE natural evolution of Gordon Craig's theory of the stage finally brought him to the point where he would dispense altogether with the play and the actor. The artist-producer would stand alone. Yvette Guilbert has accomplished this very feat, and accomplished it without the aid of super-marionettes. She still uses songs as her medium, but she has very largely discarded the authors and composers of these songs, recreating them with her own charm and wit and personality and brain. A song as Yvette Guilbert sings it exists only for a brief moment. It does not exist on paper, as you will discover if you seek out the printed version, and it certainly does not exist in the performance of any one else. Not that most of her songs are not worthy material, chosen as they are from the store-houses of a nation's treasures, but that her interpretations are so individual, so charged with deep personal feeling, so emended, so added to, so embellished with grunts, shrieks, squeaks, trills, spoken words, extra bars, or even added lines to the text; so performed that their performance itself constitutes a veritable (and, unfortunately, an extremely perishable) work of art. Sometimes, indeed, it has

seemed to me that the genius of this remarkable Frenchwoman could express itself directly, without depending upon songs.

She could have given no more complete demonstration of the inimitability of this genius than by her recent determination to lecture on the art of interpreting songs. Never has Yvette been more fascinating, never more authoritative than during those three afternoons at Maxine Elliott's Theatre, devoted ostensibly to the dissection of her method, but before she had unpacked a single instrument it must have been perfectly obvious to every auditor in the hall that she was taking great pains to explain just how impossible it would be for any one to follow in her footsteps, for any one to imitate her astonishing career. With evident candour and a multiplicity of detail she told the story of how she had built up her art. She told how she studied the words of her songs, how she planned them, what a large part the plasticity of her body played in their interpretation, and when she was done all she had said only went to prove that there is but one Yvette Guilbert.

She stripped all pretence from her vocal method, explained how she sang now in her throat, now falsetto. "When I wish to make a certain sound for a certain effect I practise by myself until I

succeed in making it. That is my vocal method. I never had a teacher. I would not trust my voice to a teacher!" Her method of learning to breathe was a practical one. She took the refrain of a little French song to work upon. She made herself learn to sing the separate phrases of this song without breathing; then two phrases together, etc., until she could sing the refrain straight through without taking a breath. Ratan Devi has told me that Indian singers, who never study vocalization in the sense that we do, are adepts in the art of breathing. "They breathe naturally and with no difficulty because it never occurs to them to distort a phrase by interrupting it for breath. They have respect for the phrase and sing it through. When you study with an occidental music teacher you will find that he will mark little Vs on the page indicating where the pupil may take breath until he can capture the length of the phrase. This method would be incomprehensible to a Hindu or to any other oriental." The wonderful breath control of Hebrew cantors who sing long and florid phrases without interruption is another case of the same kind.

Mme. Guilbert finds her effects everywhere, in nature, in art, in literature. When she was composing her interpretation of *La Soularde* she

searched in vain for the cry of the thoughtless children as they stone the poor drunken hag, until she discovered it, quite by accident one evening at the Comédie Française, in the shriek of Mounet-Sully in *Oedipe-Roi.* In studying the *Voyage à Bethléem,* one of the most popular songs of her répertoire, she felt the need of breaking the monotony of the stanzas. It was her own idea to interpolate the watchman's cry of the hours, and to add the jubilant coda, *Il est né, le divin enfant,* extracted from another song of the same period. With Guilbert nothing is left to chance. Do you remember one of her most celebrated chansons, *Notre Petite Compagne* of Jules Laforgue, which she sings so strikingly to a Waldteufel waltz,

Je suis la femme,
On me connait.

Her interpretation belies the lines. She has contrived to put all the mystery of the sphinx into her rendering of them. How has she done this? By means of the cigarette which she smokes throughout the song. She has confessed as much. Always on the lookout for material which will assist her in perfecting her art she has observed that when a woman smokes a cigarette her expression becomes inscrutable. Her effects are cumu-

lative, built up out of an inexhaustible fund of detail. In those songs in which she professes to do the least she is really doing the most. Have you heard her sing *Le Lien Serré* and witnessed the impression she produces by sewing, a piece of action not indicated in the text of the song? Have you heard her sing *L'Hotel Numero 3*, one of the répertoire of the *gants noirs* and the old days of the Divan Japonais? In this song she does not move her body; she scarcely makes a gesture, and yet her crisp manner of utterance, her subtle emphasis, her angular pose, are all that are needed to expose the humour of the ditty. Much the same comment could be made in regard to her interpretation of *Le Jeune Homme Triste.* The *apache* songs, on the contrary, are replete with gesture. Do you remember the splendid *apache* saluting his head before he goes to the guillotine? Again Yvette has given away her secret: "Naturally I have deep feelings. To be an artist one must feel intensely, but I find that it is sometimes well to give these feelings a spur. In this instance I have sewn weights into the lining of the cap of the *apache.* When I drop the cap it falls with a thud and I am reminded instinctively of the fall of the knife of the guillotine. This trick always furnishes me with the thrill I need and I can never sing the

last lines without tears in my eyes and voice."

It seems ungracious to speak of Yvette Guilbert as a great artist. She is so much less than that and so much more. She has dedicated her autobiography to God and it is certain that she believes her genius to be a holy thing. No one else on the stage to-day has worked so faithfully, or so long, no one else has so completely fulfilled her obligations to her art, and certainly no one else is so nearly human. She compasses the chasm between the artist and the public with ease. She is even able to do this in America, speaking a foreign tongue, for it has only been recently that she has learned to speak English freely and she rarely sings in our language. Her versatility, it seems to me, is limitless; she expresses the whole world in terms of her own personality. She never lacks for a method of expression for the effect she desires to give, and she gives all, heart and brains alike. Now she is raucous, now tender; have you ever seen so sweet a smile; have you ever observed so coarse a mien? She can run the gamut from a sleek priest to a child (as in *C'est le Mai*), from a jealous husband to a guilty wife (*Le Jaloux et la Menteuse*), from an *apache* (*Ma Tête*) to a charming old lady (*Lisette*).

It is easy to liken the art of this marvellous

YVETTE GUILBERT

from a photograph by Alice Boughton

woman to something concrete, to the drawings of Toulouse-Lautrec or Steinlen, the posters of Chéret . . . and there is indeed a suggestion of these men in the work of Yvette Guilbert. The same broad lines are there, the same ample style, the same complete effect, but there is more. In certain phases of her talent, the *gamine*, the *apache*, the *gavroche*, she reflects the spirit of the inspiration which kindled these painters into creation, but in other phases, of which *Lisette*, *Les Cloches de Nantes*, *La Passion*, or *Le Cycle du Vin* are the expression, you may more readily compare her style with that of Watteau, Eugene Carrière, Félicien Rops, or Boucher. . . . She takes us by the hand through the centuries, offering us the results of a vast amount of study, a vast amount of erudition, and a vast amount of work. In so many fine strokes she evokes an epoch. She has studied the distinction between a curtsey which precedes the recital of a fable of La Fontaine and a poem of Francis Jammes. She has closely scrutinized pictures in neglected corridors of the Louvre to learn the manner in which a cavalier lifts his hat in various periods. There are those who complain that she emphasizes the dramatic side of the old French songs, which possibly survive more clearly under more naïve treatment.

Her justification in this instance is the complete success of her method. The songs serve her purpose, even supposing she does not serve theirs. But a more valid cause for grievance can be urged against her. Unfortunately and ill-advisedly she has occasionally carried something of the scientific into an otherwise delightful matinée, importing a lecturer, like Jean Beck of Bryn Mawr, to analyze and describe the music of the middle ages, or even becoming pedantic and professorial herself; sometimes Yvette preaches or, still worse, permits some one else, dancer, violinist, or singer to usurp her place on the platform. These interruptions are sorry moments indeed but such lapses are forgiven with an almost divine graciousness when Yvette interprets another song. Then the dull or scholarly interpolations are forgotten.

I cannot, indeed, know where to begin to praise her or where to stop. My feelings for her performances (which I have seen and heard whenever I have been able during the past twelve years in Chicago, New York, London, and Paris) are unequivocal. There are moments when I am certain that her rendering of *La Passion* is her supreme achievement and there are moments when I prefer to see her as the unrestrained purveyor of the art of the *chansonniers* of Montmartre — unre-

strained, I say, and yet it is evident to me that she has refined her interpretations of these songs, revived twenty-five years after she first sang them, bestowed on them a spirit which originally she could not give them. From the beginning *Ma Tête, La Soularde, La Glu, La Pierreuse*, and the others were drawn as graphically as the pictures of Steinlen, but age has softened her interpretation of them. What formerly was striking has now become beautiful, what was always astonishing has become a masterpiece of artistic expression. Once, indeed, these pictures were sharply etched, but latterly they have been lithographed, drawn softly on stone. . . . I have said that I do not know in what song, in what mood, I prefer Yvette Guilbert. I can never be certain but if I were asked to choose a programme I think I should include in it *C'est le Mai, La Légende de St. Nicolas, Le Roi a Fait Battre Tambour, Les Cloches de Nantes, Le Cycle du Vin, Le Lien Serré, La Glu, Lisette, La Femme, Que l'Amour Cause de Peine*, and Oh, how many others!

All art must be beautiful, says Mme. Guilbert, and she has realized the meaning of what might have been merely a phrase; no matter how sordid or trivial her subject she has contrived to make of it something beautiful. She is not, therefore, a

realist in any literal signification of the word (although I doubt if any actress on the stage can evoke more sense of character than she) because she always smiles and laughs and weeps with the women she represents; she sympathizes with them, she humanizes them, where another interpreter would coldly present them for an audience to take or to leave, exposing them to cruel inspection. Even in her interpretation of heartless women it is always to our sense of humour that she appeals, while in her rendering of *Ma Tête* and *La Pierreuse* she strikes directly at our hearts. Zola once told Mme. Guilbert that the *apaches* were the logical descendants of the old chevaliers of France. "They are the only men we have now who will fight over a woman!" he said. When you hear Mme. Guilbert call "*Pi-ouit!*" you will readily perceive that she understands what Zola meant.

Wonderful Yvette, who has embodied so many pleasant images in the theatre, who has expressed to the world so much of the soul of France, so much of the soul of art itself, but, above all, so much of the soul of humanity. It is not alone General Booth who has made friends of "drabs from the alley-ways and drug fiends pale — Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail! Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath, unwashed legions

with the ways of death": these are all friends of Yvette Guilbert too. And when Balzac wrote the concluding paragraph of "Massimila Doni" he may have foreseen the later application of the lines. . . . Surely "the peris, nymphs, fairies, sylphs of the olden time, the muses of Greece, the marble Virgins of the Certosa of Pavia, the Day and Night of Michael Angelo, the little angels that Bellini first drew at the foot of church paintings, and to whom Raphael gave such divine form at the foot of the Vierge au donataire, and of the Madonna freezing at Dresden; Orcagna's captivating maidens in the Church of Or San Michele at Florence, the heavenly choirs on the tombs of St. Sebald at Nuremberg, several Virgins in the Duomo at Milan, the hordes of a hundred Gothic cathedrals, the whole nation of figures who break their forms to come to you, O all-embracing artists —" surely, surely, all these hover over Yvette Guilbert.

April 16, 1917.

Waslav Nijinsky

"A thing of beauty is a boy forever."
Allen Norton.

Waslav Nijinsky

SERGE DE DIAGHILEW brought the dregs of the Russian Ballet to New York and, after a first greedy gulp, inspired by curiosity to get a taste of this highly advertised beverage, the public drank none too greedily. The scenery and the costumes, designed by Bakst, Roerich, Benois, and Larionow, and the music of Rimsky-Korsakow, Tcherepnine, Schumann, Borodine, Balakirew, and Strawinsky — especially Strawinsky — arrived. It was to be deplored, however, that Bakst had seen fit to replace the original *décor* of *Scheherazade* by a new setting in rawer colours, in which the flaming orange fairly burned into the ultramarine and green (readers of "A Rebours" will remember that des Esseintes designed a room something like this). A few of the dancers came, but of the best not a single one. Nor was Fokine, the dancer-producer, who devised the choregraphy for *The Firebird*, *Cléopâtre*, and *Petrouchka*, among the number, although his presence had been announced and expected. To those enthusiasts, and they included practically every one who had seen the Ballet in its greater glory, who had prepared their friends for an overwhemingly brilliant spectacle, over-using

the phrase, " a perfect union of the arts," the early performances in January, 1916, at the Century Theatre were a great disappointment. Often had we urged that the individual played but a small part in this new and gorgeous entertainment, but now we were forced to admit that the ultimate glamour was lacking in the ensemble, which was obviously no longer the glad, gay entity it once had been.

The picture was still there, the music (not always too well played) but the interpretation was mediocre. The agile Miassine could scarcely be called either a great dancer or a great mime. He had been chosen by Diaghilew for the rôle of Joseph in Richard Strauss's version of the Potiphar legend but, during the course of a London season carried through without the co-operation of Nijinsky, this was the only part allotted to him. In New York he interpreted, not without humour and with some technical skill, the incidental divertissement from Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, *The Snow-Maiden,* against a vivid background by Larionow. The uninspired choregraphy of this ballet was also ascribed to Miassine by the programme, although probably in no comminatory spirit. In the small rôle of Eusebius in *Carneval*

and in the negligible part of the Prince in *The Firebird* he was entirely satisfactory, but it was impertinent of the direction to assume that he would prove an adequate substitute for Nijinsky in rôles to which that dancer had formerly applied his extremely finished art.

Adolf Bolm contributed his portraits of the Moor in *Petrouchka*, of Pierrot in *Carneval*, and of the Chief Warrior in the dances from *Prince Igor*. These three rôles completely express the possibilities of Bolm as a dancer or an actor, and sharply define his limitations. His other parts, Dakon in *Daphnis et Chloë* — Sadko, the Prince in *Thamar*, Amoun in *Cléopâtre*, the Slave in *Scheherazade*, and Pierrot in *Papillons*, are only variations on the three afore-mentioned themes. His friends often confuse his vitality and abundant energy with a sense of characterization and a skill as a dancer which he does not possess. For the most part he is content to express himself by stamping his heels and gnashing his teeth, and when, as in *Cléopâtre*, he attempts to convey a more subtle meaning to his general gesture, he is not very successful. Bolm is an interesting and useful member of the organization, but he could not make or unmake a season; nor could Gavrilow, who

is really a fine dancer in his limited way, although he is unfortunately lacking in magnetism and any power of characterization.

But it was on the distaff side of the cast that the Ballet seemed pitifully undistinguished, even to those who did not remember the early Paris seasons when the roster included the names of Anna Pavlowa, Tamara Karsavina, Caterina Gheltzer, and Ida Rubinstein. The leading feminine dancer of the troupe when it gave its first exhibitions in New York was Xenia Maclezova, who had not, so far as my memory serves, danced in any London or Paris season of the Ballet (except for one gala performance at the Paris Opéra which preceded the American tour), unless in some very menial capacity. This dancer, like so many others, had the technique of her art at her toes' ends. Sarah Bernhardt once told a reporter that the acquirement of technique never did any harm to an artist, and if one were not an artist it was not a bad thing to have. I have forgotten how many times Mlle. Maclezova could pirouette without touching the toe in the air to the floor, but it was some prodigious number. She was past mistress of the *entrechat* and other mysteries of the ballet academy. Here, however, her knowledge of her art seemed to end, in the subjugation of its very mech-

anism. She was very nearly lacking in those qualities of grace, poetry, and imagination with which great artists are freely endowed, and although she could not actually have been a woman of more than average weight, she often conveyed to the spectator an impression of heaviness. In such a work as *The Firebird* she really offended the eye. Far from interpreting the ballet, she gave you an idea of how it should not be done.

Her season with the Russians was terminated in very short order, and Lydia Lopoukova, who happened to be in America, and who, indeed, had already been engaged for certain rôles, was rushed into her vacant slippers. Now Mme. Lopoukova had charm as a dancer, whatever her deficiencies in technique. In certain parts, notably as Colombine in *Carneval*, she assumed a roguish demeanor which was very fetching. As La Ballerine in *Petrouchka*, too, she met all the requirements of the action. But in *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Les Sylphides*, *The Firebird*, and *La Princesse Enchantée*, she floundered hopelessly out of her element.

Tchernicheva, one of the lesser but more steadfast luminaries of the Ballet, in the rôles for which she was cast, the principal Nymph in *L'Aprés-midi d'un Faune*, Echo in *Narcisse*, and the Princess in *The Firebird*, more than fulfilled her obligations to

the ensemble, but her opportunities in these mimic plays were not of sufficient importance to enable her to carry the brunt of the performances on her lovely shoulders. Flore Revalles was drafted, I understand, from a French opera company. I have been told that she sings — Tosca is one of her rôles — as well as she dances. That may very well be. To impressionable spectators she seemed a real *femme fatale.* Her Cléopâtre suggested to me a Parisian *cocotte* much more than an Egyptian queen. It would be blasphemy to compare her with Ida Rubinstein in this rôle — Ida Rubinstein, who was true Aubrey Beardsley! In Thamar and Zobeide, both to a great extent dancing rôles, Mlle. Revalles, both as dancer and actress, was but a frail substitute for Karsavina.

The remainder of the company was adequate, but not large, and the ensemble was by no means as brilliant as those who had seen the Ballet in London or Paris might have expected. Nor in the absence of Fokine, that master of detail, were performances sufficiently rehearsed. There was, of course, explanation in plenty for this disintegration. Gradually, indeed, the Ballet as it had existed in Europe had suffered a change. Only a miracle and a fortune combined would have sufficed to hold the original company intact. It was

not held intact, and the war made further inroads on its integrity. Then, for the trip to America many of the dancers probably were inclined to demand double pay. Undoubtedly, Serge de Diaghilew had many more troubles than those which were celebrated in the public prints, and it must be admitted that, even with his weaker company, he gave us finer exhibitions of stage art than had previously been even the exception here.

In the circumstances, however, certain pieces, which were originally produced when the company was in the flush of its first glory, should never have been presented here at all. It was not the part of reason, for example, to pitchfork on the Century stage an indifferent performance of *Le Pavilion d'Armide*, in which Nijinsky once disported himself as the favourite slave, and which, as a matter of fact, requires a company of *virtuosi* to make it a passable diversion. *Cléopâtre*, in its original form with Nijinsky, Fokine, Pavlowa, Ida Rubinstein, and others, hit all who saw it square between the eyes. The absurdly expurgated edition, with its inadequate cast, offered to New York, was but the palest shadow of the sensuous entertainment that had aroused all Paris, from the Batignolles to the Bastille. The music, the setting, the costumes — what else was left to

celebrate? The altered choregraphy, the deplorable interpretation, drew tears of rage from at least one pair of eyes. It was quite incomprehensible also why *The Firebird*, which depends on the grace and poetical imagination of the filmiest and most fairy-like actress-dancer, should have found a place in the répertoire. It is the dancing equivalent of a coloratura soprano rôle in opera. Thankful, however, for the great joy of having reheard Strawinsky's wonderful score, I am willing to overlook this tactical error.

All things considered, it is small wonder that a large slice of the paying population of New York tired of the Ballet in short order. One reason for this cessation of interest was the constant repetition of ballets. In London and Paris the seasons as a rule have been shorter, and on certain evenings of the week opera has taken the place of the dance. It has been rare indeed that a single work has been repeated more than three or four times during an engagement. I have not found it stupid to listen to and look at perhaps fifteen performances of varying degrees of merit of *Petrouchka*, *Scheherazade*, *Carneval*, and the dances from *Prince Igor;* I would rather see the Russian Ballet repeatedly, even as it existed in America, than four thousand five hundred and six Broad-

way plays or seventy-three operas at the Metropolitan once, but I dare say I may look upon myself as an exception.

At any rate, when the company entered upon a four weeks' engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House, included in the regular subscription season of opera, the subscribers groaned; many of them groaned aloud, and wrote letters to the management and to the newspapers. To be sure, during the tour which had followed the engagement at the Century the répertoire had been increased, but the company remained the same — until the coming of Waslav Nijinsky.

When America was first notified of the impending visit of the Russian Ballet it was also promised that Waslav Nijinsky and Tamara Karsavina would head the organization. It was no fault of the American direction or of Serge de Diaghilew that they did not do so. Various excuses were advanced for the failure of Karsavina to forsake her family in Russia and to undertake the journey to the United States but, whatever the cause, there seems to remain no doubt that she refused to come. As for Nijinsky, he, with his wife, had been a prisoner in an Austrian detention camp since the beginning of the war. Wheels were set grinding but wheels grind slowly in an epoch of interna-

tional bloodshed, and it was not until March, 1916, that the Austrian ambassador at Washington was able to announce that Nijinsky had been set free.

I do not believe the coming to this country of any other celebrated person had been more widely advertised, although P. T. Barnum may have gone further in describing the charitable and vocal qualities of Jenny Lind. Nijinsky had been extravagantly praised, not only by the official press representatives but also by eminent critics and private persons, in adjectives which seemed to preclude any possibility of his living up to them. I myself had been among the pæan singers. I had thrust "half-man, half-god" into print. "A flame!" cried some one. Another, "A jet of water from a fountain!" Such men in the street as had taken the trouble to consider the subject at all very likely expected the arrival of some stupendous and immortal monstrosity, a gravity-defying being with sixteen feet (at least), who bounded like a rubber ball, never touching the solid stage except at the beginning and end of the evening's performance.

Nijinsky arrived in April. Almost immediately he gave vent to one of those expressions of temperament often associated with interpretative genius,

the kind of thing I have described at some length in "Music and Bad Manners." He was not at all pleased with the Ballet as he found it. Interviewed, he expressed his displeasure in the newspapers. The managers of the organization wisely remained silent, and a controversy was avoided, but the public had received a suggestion of petulance which could not contribute to the popularity of the new dancer.

Nijinsky danced for the first time in New York on the afternoon of April 12, at the Metropolitan Opera House. The pieces in which he appeared on that day were *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *Petrouchka.* Some of us feared that eighteen months in a detention camp would have stamped their mark on the dancer. As a matter of fact his connection with the Russian Ballet had been severed in 1913, a year before the war began. I can say for myself that I was probably a good deal more nervous than Nijinsky on the occasion of his first appearance in America. It would have been a cruel disappointment to me to have discovered that his art had perished during the intervening three years since I had last seen him. My fears were soon dissipated. A few seconds after he as the Rose Ghost had bounded through the window, it was evident that he was in possession of all his

powers; nay, more, that he had added to the refinement and polish of his style. I had called Nijinsky's dancing perfection in years gone by, because it so far surpassed that of his nearest rival; now he had surpassed himself. True artists, indeed, have a habit of accomplishing this feat. I may call to your attention the careers of Olive Fremstad, Yvette Guilbert, and Marie Tempest. Later I learned that this first impression might be relied on. Nijinsky, in sooth, has now no rivals upon the stage. One can only compare him with himself!

The Weber-Gautier dance-poem, from the very beginning until the end, when he leaps out of the window of the girl's chamber into the night, affords this great actor-dancer one of his most grateful opportunities. It is in this very part, perhaps, which requires almost unceasing exertion for nearly twelve minutes, that Nijinsky's powers of co-ordination, mental, imaginative, muscular, are best displayed. His dancing is accomplished in that flowing line, without a break between poses and gestures, which is the despair of all novices and almost all other *virtuosi*. After a particularly difficult leap or toss of the legs or arms, it is a marvel to observe how, without an instant's pause to regain his poise, he rhythmically glides into the

succeeding gesture. His dancing has the unbroken quality of music, the balance of great painting, the meaning of fine literature, and the emotion inherent in all these arts. There is something of transmutation in his performances; he becomes an alembic, transforming movement into a finely wrought and beautiful work of art. The dancing of Nijinsky is first an imaginative triumph, and the spectator, perhaps, should not be interested in further dissection of it, but a more intimate observer must realize that behind this the effect produced depends on his supreme command of his muscles. It is not alone the final informing and magnetized imaginative quality that most other dancers lack; it is also just this muscular co-ordination. Observe Gavrilow in the piece under discussion, in which he gives a good imitation of Nijinsky's general style, and you will see that he is unable to maintain this rhythmic continuity.

Nijinsky's achievements become all the more remarkable when one remembers that he is working with an imperfect physical medium. Away from the scene he is an insignificant figure, short and ineffective in appearance. Aside from the pert expression of his eyes, he is like a dozen other young Russians. Put him unintroduced into a

drawing-room with Jacques Copeau, Orchidée, Doris Keane, Bill Haywood, Edna Kenton, the Baroness de Meyer, Paulet Thevenaz, the Marchesa Casati, Marcel Duchamp, Cathleen Nesbitt, H. G. Wells, Anna Pavlowa, Rudyard Chennevière, Vladimir Rebikow, Henrie Waste, and Isadora Duncan, and he probably would pass entirely unnoticed. On the stage it may be observed that the muscles of his legs are overdeveloped and his ankles are too large; that is, if you are in the mood for picking flaws, which most of us are not in the presence of Nijinsky in action. Here, however, stricture halts confounded; his head is set on his shoulders in a manner to give satisfaction to a great sculptor, and his torso, with its slender waist line, is quite beautiful. On the stage, Nijinsky makes of himself what he will. He can look tall or short, magnificent or ugly, fascinating or repulsive. Like so many interpretative artists, he remoulds himself for his public appearances. It is under the electric light in front of the painted canvas that he becomes a personality, and that personality is governed only by the scenario of the ballet he is representing.

From the day of Nijinsky's arrival, the ensemble of the Ballet improved; somewhat of the spontaneity of the European performances was regained;

a good deal of the glamour was recaptured; the loose lines were gathered taut, and the choregraphy of Fokine (Nijinsky is a director as well as a dancer) was restored to some of its former power. He has appeared in nine rôles in New York during the two short seasons in which he has been seen with the Russian Ballet here: the Slave in *Scheherazade*, Petrouchka, the Rose Ghost, the Faun, the Harlequin in *Carneval*, Narcisse, Till Eulenspiegel, and the principal male rôles of *La Princesse Enchantée* and *Les Sylphides*. To enjoy the art of Nijinsky completely, to fully appreciate his genius, it is necessary not only to see him in a variety of parts, but also to see him in the same rôle many times.

Study the detail of his performance in *Scheherazade*, for example. Its precision alone is noteworthy. Indeed, precision is a quality we see exposed so seldom in the theatre that when we find it we are almost inclined to hail it as genius. The rôle of the Slave in this ballet is perhaps Nijinsky's scenic masterpiece — exotic eroticism expressed in so high a key that its very existence seems incredible on our puritanic stage, and yet with such great art (the artist always expresses himself with beauty) that the intention is softened by the execution. Before the arrival of this dan-

cer, *Scheherazade* had become a police court scandal. There had been talk of a "Jim Crow" performance in which the blacks were to be separated from the whites in the harem, and I am told that our provincial police magistrates even wanted to replace the "mattresses" — so were the divans of the sultanas described in court — by rocking chairs! But to the considerably more vivid *Scheherazade* of Nijinsky no exception was taken. This strange, curious, head-wagging, simian creature, scarce human, wriggled through the play, leaving a long streak of lust and terror in his wake. Never did Nijinsky as the Negro Slave touch the Sultana, but his subtle and sensuous fingers fluttered close to her flesh, clinging once or twice questioningly to a depending tassel. Pierced by the javelins of the Sultan's men, the Slave's death struggle might have been revolting and gruesome. Instead, Nijinsky carried the eye rapidly upward with his tapering feet as they balanced for the briefest part of a second straight high in the air, only to fall inert with so brilliantly quick a movement that the æsthetic effect grappled successfully with the feeling of disgust which might have been aroused. This was acting, this was characterization, so completely merged in rhythm that the result became a perfect whole, and not a combina-

tion of several intentions, as so often results from the work of an actor-dancer.

The heart-breaking Petrouchka, the roguish Harlequin, the Chopiniac of *Les Sylphides*,— all were offered to our view; and *Narcisse*, in which Nijinsky not only did some very beautiful dancing, but posed (as the Greek youth admired himself in the mirror of the pool) with such utter and arresting grace that even here he awakened a definite thrill. In *La Princesse Enchantée* he merely danced, but how he danced! Do you who saw him still remember those flickering fingers and toes? "He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers," is written in the Book of Proverbs, and the writer might have had in mind Nijinsky in *La Princesse Enchantée*. All these parts were differentiated, all completely realized, in the threefold intricacy of this baffling art, which perhaps is not an art at all until it is so realized, when its plastic, rhythmic, and histrionic elements become an entity.

After a summer in Spain and Switzerland, without Nijinsky, the Russian Ballet returned to America for a second season, opening at the Manhattan Opera House October 16, 1916. It is always a delight to hear and see performances in this theatre, and it was found that the brilliance of the

Ballet was much enhanced by its new frame. The season, however, opened with a disappointment. It had been announced that Nijinsky would dance on the first night his choregraphic version of Richard Strauss's tone-poem, *Till Eulenspiegel.* It is not the first time that a press agent has made a false prophecy. While rehearsing the new work, Nijinsky twisted his ankle, and during the first week of the engagement he did not appear at all. This was doubly unfortunate, because the company was weaker than it had been the previous season, lacking both Miassine and Tchernicheva. The only novelty (for America) produced during the first week was an arrangement of the divertissement from Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, *Sadko,* which had already been given a few times in Paris and London by the Ballet, never with conspicuous success. The second week of the season, Nijinsky returned to appear in three rôles, the Faun, Till Eulenspiegel, and the Slave in *Scheherazade.* Of his performance to Debussy's lovely music I have written elsewhere; nor did this new vision cause me to revise my opinions.

Till Eulenspiegel is the only new ballet the Russians have produced in America. (*Soleil de Nuit* was prepared in Europe, and performed once at the Paris Opéra before it was seen in New York.

Besides, it was an arrangement of dances from an opera which is frequently given in Russia and which has been presented at the Opéra-Comique in Paris.) The *chef d'orchestre*, Pierre Monteux, refused to direct performances of this work, on the ground that the composer was not only a German, but a very much alive and active German patriot. On the occasions, therefore, that *Till* was performed in New York, the orchestra struggled along under the baton of Dr. Anselm Goetzl. In selecting this work and in his arrangement of the action Nijinsky was moved, no doubt, by consideration for the limitations of the company as it existed,— from which he was able to secure the effects he desired. The scenery and costumes by Robert E. Jones, of New York, were decidedly diverting — the best work this talented young man has done, I think. Over a deep, spreading background of ultramarine, the crazy turrets of mediæval castles leaned dizzily to and fro. The costumes were exaggerations of the exaggerated fashions of the Middle Ages. Mr. Jones added feet of stature to the already elongated peaked headdresses of the period. The trains of the velvet robes, which might have extended three yards, were allowed to trail the full depth of the Manhattan Opera House stage. The colours were oranges,

reds, greens, and blues, those indeed of Bakst's *Scheherazade*, but so differently disposed that they made an entirely dissimilar impression. The effect reminded one spectator of a Spanish omelet.

In arranging the scenario, Nijinsky followed in almost every detail Wilhelm Klatte's description of the meaning of the music, which is printed in programme books whenever the tone-poem is performed, without Strauss's authority, but sometimes with his sanction. Nijinsky was quite justified in altering the end of the work, which hangs the rogue-hero, into another practical joke. His version of this episode fits the music and, in the original *Till Eulenspiegel* stories, Till is not hanged, but dies in bed. The keynote of Nijinsky's interpretation was gaiety. He was as utterly picaresque as the work itself; he reincarnated the spirit of Gil Blas; indeed, a new quality crept into stage expression through this characterization. Margaret Wycherly, one of the most active admirers of the dancer, told me after the first performance that she felt that he had for the first time leaped into the hearts of the great American public, whose appreciation of his subtler art as expressed in *Narcisse*, *Petrouchka*, and even *Scheherazade*, had been more moderate. There were those who protested that this was not the Till of the German

WASLAV NIJINSKY IN DEBUSSY'S *JEUX* (1913)

legends, but any actor who attempts to give form to a folk or historical character, or even a character derived from fiction, is forced to run counter to many an observer's preconceived ideas.

"It is an error to believe that pantomime is merely a way of doing without words," writes Arthur Symons, "that it is merely the equivalent of words. Pantomime is thinking overheard. It begins and ends before words have formed themselves, in a deeper consciousness than that of speech. And it addresses itself, by the artful limitations of its craft, to universal human experience, knowing that the moment it departs from those broad lines it will become unintelligible. It risks existence on its own perfection, as the rope-dancer does, to whom a false step means a downfall. And it appeals democratically to people of all nations. . . . And pantomime has that mystery which is one of the requirements of true art. To watch it is like dreaming. How silently, in dreams, one gathers the unheard sounds of words from the lips that do but make pretence of saying them! And does not every one know that terrifying impossibility of speaking which fastens one to the ground for the eternity of a second, in what is the new, perhaps truer, computation of time in dreams? Something like that sense of suspense

seems to hang over the silent actors in pantomime, giving them a nervous exaltation, which has its subtle, immediate effect upon us, in tragic and comic situation. The silence becomes an atmosphere, and with a very curious power of giving distinction to form and motion. I do not see why people should ever break silence on the stage except to speak poetry. Here, in pantomime, you have a gracious, expressive silence, beauty of gesture, a perfectly discreet appeal to the emotions, a transposition of the world into an elegant accepted convention."

Arthur Symons wrote these words before he had seen the Russian Ballet, before the Russian Ballet, as we know it, existed, indeed, before Nijinsky had begun to dance in public, and he felt that the addition of poetry and music to pantomime — the Wagner music-drama in other words — brought about a perfect combination of the arts. Nevertheless, there is an obvious application of his remarks to the present instance. There is, indeed, the quality of a dream about the characters Nijinsky presents to us. I remember once, at a performance of the Russian Ballet, I sat in a box next to a most intelligent man, a writer himself; I was meeting him for the first time, and he was seeing the Ballet for the first time. Before the

curtain rose he had told me that dancing and pantomime were very pretty to look at, but that he found no stimulation in watching them, no mental and spiritual exaltation, such as might follow a performance of *Hamlet*. Having seen Nijinsky, I could not agree with him — and this indifferent observer became that evening himself a fervent disciple of the Ballet. For Nijinsky gave him, he found, just what his ideal performance of Shakespeare's play might have given him, a basis for dreams, for thinking, for poetry. The ennobling effect of all great and perfect art, after the primary emotion, seems to be to set our minds wandering in a thousand channels, to suggest new outlets. Pater's experience before the *Monna Lisa* is only unique in its intense and direct expression.

No writer, no musician, no painter, can feel deep emotion before a work of art without expressing it in some way, although the expression may be a thousand leagues removed from the inspiration. And how few of us can view the art of Nijinsky without emotion! To the painter he gives a new sense of proportion, to the musician a new sense of rhythm, while to the writer he must perforce immediately suggest new words; better still, new meanings for old words. Dance, pantomime, acting, harmony, all these divest themselves

of their worn-out accoutrements and appear, as if clothed by magic, in garments of unheard-of novelty; hue, texture, cut, and workmanship are all a surprise to us. We look enraptured, we go away enthralled, and perhaps even unconsciously a new quality creeps into our own work. It is the same glamour cast over us by contemplation of the Campo Santo at Pisa, or the Roman Theatre at Orange, or the Cathedral at Chartres,— the inspiration for one of the most word-jewelled books in any language — or the New York sky line at twilight as one sails away into the harbour, or a great iron crane which lifts tons of alien matter in its gaping jaw. Great music can give us this feeling, the symphonies of Beethoven, Mozart's *Don Giovanni,* Schubert's *C Major Symphony,* or César Franck's *D Minor, The Sacrifice to the Spring* of Strawinsky, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* of Debussy, Chabrier's Rhapsody, *España;* great interpretative musicians can give it to us, Ysaye at his best, Paderewski, Marcella Sembrich in song recital; but how few artists on the stage suggest even as much as the often paltry lines of the author, the often banal music of the composer! There is an *au delà* to all great interpretative art, something that remains after story, words, picture, and gesture have faded vaguely into that

storeroom in our memories where are concealed these lovely ghosts of ephemeral beauty, and the artist who is able to give us this is blessed even beyond his knowledge, for to him has been vouchsafed the sacred kiss of the gods. This quality cannot be acquired, it cannot even be described, but it can be felt. With its beneficent aid the interpreter not only contributes to our pleasure, he broadens our horizon, adds to our knowledge and capacity for feeling.

As I read over these notes I realize that I have not been able to discover flaws in the art of this young man. It seems to me that in his chosen medium he approaches perfection. What he attempts to do, he always does perfectly. Can one say as much for any other interpreter? But it is a difficult matter to give the spirit of Nijinsky, to describe his art on paper, to capture the abundant grace, the measureless poetry, the infinite illusion of his captivating motion in ink. Who can hope to do it? Future generations must take our word for his greatness. We can do little more than call it that. I shall have served my purpose if I have succeeded in this humble article in bringing back to those who have seen him a flashing glimpse of the imaginative actuality.

January 16, 1917.

Epilogue

as a substitute for a preface to the new edition.

Epilogue

I

IT was formerly the custom, in England at any rate, to publish one book in two or three volumes. Judge, therefore, of my dismay and delight on discovering, shortly after the first appearance of "Interpreters and Interpretations," in 1917, that I, abetted by my always delightfully agreeable publisher, had issued two books in one volume! Even the title itself fell apart. This practical detail has made it a comparatively simple matter to exhibit these twins separately in the future, and such is my intention. This volume, then, contains the first half of the longer book.

I have been asked occasionally why I devote so much attention in my writing to interpreters. The answer is, of course, that I devote very little attention to them, not enough, I sometimes think. This book, indeed, says nearly all that I have said up to date on the subject. But I am not at all in sympathy with those critics of music and the drama who lay stress on the relative unimportance of interpreters. Sometimes I am inclined to believe that interpreters, who mould their own personalities rather than clay or words, are greater

than creators. I think we might have a more ideal theatre if interpreters could be their own creators, like the mediæval troubadours or the gipsies of Spain. For there are many disadvantages about creative art. One of them is its persistence. Beethoven and Dante wrote notes and letters down on paper and there they remain, apparently forever. It is very annoying. Legends hover round the names of these artists, and for centuries after their deaths all the stupid creators in the world try to do something similar to the work these men have done, and all the really inspired artists have to pass a period of probation during which they strive to forget the work these men have done. "You will find," remarks sagaciously one Henry C. Lunn, "that people will often praise a bad fugue because Bach has produced so many good ones." It would be much better for everybody if a law were passed consigning all creative work to the flames ten years after it saw the light. Then we would have novelty. If Beethoven recurred again, at least nobody would know it. Any knowledge about books or pictures or music of the past would have to be carried in the memory and in a few decades all memory of anything that was not essential would have disappeared. It must have

been a thrilling experience to have lived in Alexandria at the time the library was burned. Just think, twenty years after that event, philosophers and professors probably could be found in Alexandria who did not go round with long faces telling you what had been done and what should be done. No references to the early Assyrians and the Greeks until the papyruses were replaced. The Renaissance and the Revival of Learning, on the other hand, doubtless pleasant enough at the time, smeared a terrible blot on the future of art.

Now interpretative art is different. It depends upon the contemporary individual, and some of its most thrilling effects may be entirely accidental. Any traditions which persist in interpretative art must be carried in the memory. In exceptional cases, of course, a singer, a dancer, or an actor is able to so stamp his or her personal achievement into the flowing rhythm of artistic space that a *style* does persist. We have a very good example before us in the case of Isadora Duncan, who has been followed by a long train of animated Grecian urns. The deleterious effect of this persistence of an interpretative tradition must be apparent to any one. For the imitator of an interpreter is a thousand times more futile

than the imitator of a creator. Fortunately, on the whole, styles in acting, in singing, and in dancing frequently change. The Catalani-Jenny Lind-Patti tradition, which God knows has hung on long enough, is nearly exhausted. We live in the age of the Mary Garden tradition.

There is another and even better reason why I find it pleasant to write about interpreters. In looking over the books on music written in the past I find that the books about singers are infinitely more fascinating than the books about composers. I am enthralled by what H. F. Chorley has to say about Pauline Viardot and Henrietta Sontag; I am delighted with the Goncourt's books about Guimard, Clairon, and Sophie Arnould. Auguste Ehrhard's "Fanny Elssler" is an extraordinary document and one cannot afford to miss P. T. Barnum on Jenny Lind and Mapleson on Patti. But I find that the old scribes on Mozart and Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Schubert, quite bore me, and it is impossible to say anything new about these men. Books about Beethoven are still appearing but I advise nobody to read them. The authors have arrived at that fine point where they can only compare authorities and quibble about details. Was Bee-

thoven in a cold sweat when he composed the *Ninth Symphony* or was he merely angry? The ink on the manuscript of such and such a work being blotted on a certain page, interest naturally arises as to whether the fifth note in the sixteenth bar is F sharp or G flat. Did Haydn or Prince H—— conduct the first performance of the *Symphony in X major?* Did Weber arrive in England on Thursday or Friday? And so on. It is all very tiresome.

Sometimes I believe that it is the whole duty of a critic to write about interpreters, about the interpretative arts. Less is understood about acting, singing, and dancing than about anything else in the field of aesthetic discussion, the more that is written about them, therefore, the better. Besides creative artists speak for themselves. Anybody can read a book; anybody can see a picture, or a reproduction of it. As for posterity it rejects all contemporary criticism of creative work; it has no use for it. It goes back to the work itself. So the critic of creative work entirely disappears in the course of a few years. After his short day nobody will read him any more.

Now an actor, a singer, or a dancer, can ap-

pear in comparatively few places for a comparatively short time. The number of people who can see or hear these interpreters is relatively small; consequently they like to read about them. As for posterity it is absolutely dependent upon books for its knowledge of the interpreters of a bygone day. That is the only way it can see the actors of the past. For that reason I am perfectly sure in my own mind that of such of my books as are devoted to criticism this is the one most likely to please posterity.

All criticism may not be creative writing, but certainly all good criticism is. For all good writing should be self-expression and the subject treated and the form into which it is cast are mere matters of convenience. There is no essential difference between poetry, fiction, drama, and essay. An essay may be as creative as a work of fiction, often it is more so. You will find criticism elsewhere than in the work of acknowledged critics. Dostoevsky's "The House of the Dead" is certainly a critical work, but the author chooses to criticize the conditions under which human beings are compelled to live rather than the works of Pushkin. Turgeniev once wrote to Flaubert, "There is no longer any artist of the present time

who is not also a critic." He might have added that while all artists are assuredly critics, all critics are not artists. On the other hand Walter Pater's famous passage about the *Monna Lisa* is certainly creative; it might almost be held responsible for the vogue of the picture. Before the war, nearly any day you might find frail American ladies from the Middle West standing in front of Leonardo's canvas and repeating the lines like so much doggerel. All artists express themselves as they may but they are not artists unless they express *themselves.* Only thus may they establish a current between themselves and their readers; only thus may they arouse emotion. And if they succeed in arousing emotion we may disregard the form in which their work is cast and bathe in the essence of spirit and idea.

Whether you agree with this theory or not you must be compelled to admit that criticism of interpreters, if it is anything at all, is bound to be creative. For the art of the interpreter exists in time and space only for the moment in an arbitrary place. Therefore he who writes about an interpreter is using him to express certain ideas as a painter uses his model.

It is a well-established fact that singers and

actors in general only approve of the critics who praise them, but it will readily be apparent that there is a good instinctive reason back of this peculiarity. Their work only lives as it exists in criticism and people who dwell in places where these actors are not to be seen or in times after they are dead must perforce depend upon the critic for their impressions of these interpreters. The case of creative work is entirely different. The creator of genius should never be disturbed by a bad criticism. If his work is good it will far outlast the criticism. Indeed a bad notice helps a fine book to find its public sooner than a good notice, because it attracts attention and stimulates discussion. I think it is likely, for instance, that the striking collection of bad notices of his previous books, which James Branch Cabell inserted in the end pages of "The Cream of the Jest," did as much to advertise that author as the subsequent publication of "Jurgen."

II

Somewhere in Agnes G. Murphy's vivid but somewhat hysterical account of the life and adventures of Madame Melba, the diva's Boswell declares that the singer never permitted herself

the pleasure of meeting newspaper critics lest, it is to be assumed, they should be prejudiced in her favour through the acquaintanceship. I can assure Madame Melba that this decision, if strictly adhered to, has cost her many pleasant hours, for I number certain music critics among my most diverting friends. I can further assure these colleagues of mine that they have missed knowing a very amusing woman, for once, not being considered at the time anything so formidable as a critic, I was permitted to sit next to the Australian canary while she toyed with her grapefruit and tasted her *oeuf bénédictine*.

Madame Melba's point of view is not held exclusively by her. There are many singers who believe that a series of dinner invitations will buy a critic's pen; a few do not hesitate to offer emerald stick-pins and even substantial cheques. These methods are often entirely successful. On the other hand there are critics who will rush across the street, though the mud be ankle deep, to avoid an introduction to an artist. I have been frequently asked where I stood in the matter, as if it were necessary to take a stand and defend it.

I may say that if my profession kept me from

knowing anybody I really wanted to know I should relinquish that profession without hesitation. It is absurd to feel that you cannot dine with a singer without praising her performances. Many days in each month I dine with authors whose works I abhor. I find their companionship delightful. Should I be deprived of their society because I happen to be a critic? I suppose I have a price — almost everybody has — but I should like to state right here and now that it is not a dinner, or a series of dinners, or even an emerald scarf-pin. I should be inclined, however, I admit frankly, to say at least gentle things about a lady who made me a present of a blooded silver cat.

But the crux of the matter lies deeper than this. No mere music critic can hope to write about singing, violin playing, or piano playing without knowing singers, violinists, and pianists. He can learn much from books, from the reviews of other critics, from hearing performances, but the great critics are those who study from the lips of the interpreters themselves. The valuable hints, suggestions, and inspiration that a critic with an open mind can gather from an interpreter are priceless, and not to be found elsewhere. Not that an interpreter will always tell the truth, not

that he always knows what the truth is in his particular case. Nevertheless any *virtuoso* will always have something of interest to say. It stands to reason that any man or woman who has devoted his life to his profession will know more about its difficulties, limitations, and tricks, than a mere critic can hope to learn in any way except through social intercourse with the interpreter. A young critic may learn much through reading Chorley, Burney, Schumann, Ernest Newman, and James Huneker. He can further prepare himself for his trade by listening with open ears to concerts and operas (although, in passing, it may be stated categorically that no critic learns immediately the value of opening his ears, so steeped is he in the false tradition of his craft), by burying his nose in the scores of the masters, and by reading all that the composers themselves may have said about the performances of their works. But he can learn more in a five-minute conversation with a great orchestral conductor, a great singer, or a great instrumentalist than he can in all the other ways combined.

Arturo Toscanini, Mary Garden, Ysaye, Marcella Sembrich, Yvette Guilbert, Pablo Casals, Fritz Kreisler, Waslav Nijinsky, Marguerite

d'Alvarez, or Leo Ornstein can give any reviewer, young or old, invaluable lessons. Such as these are their own severest critics and they teach the writer-critic to be severe — and just. One piece of advice, however, I would give to prospective critics. Become acquainted with artist-interpreters by all means, but other things being equal, it is perhaps better to meet good artists than bad ones!

III

Chaliapine, Nijinsky, Mazarin, and Fremstad [1] have not appeared on the New York stage since I painted their portraits; nor have I seen them elsewhere. Consequently any revision I might make in these pictures would be revision of what I felt then in terms of what I feel now. Nothing could be more ridiculous. So I let them stand as they are.

With Yvette Guilbert the case is somewhat different. She has been before the American public almost consistently since the original publication of this book. Her work at her own recitals is still the fine thing it was and probably will remain

[1] Madame Fremstad has appeared in concert in New York but not in opera.

so for a great many years to come. Madame Guilbert, however, has seen fit to appear in a play at the Neighbourhood Playhouse in New York, a fourteenth century French miracle play called *Guibour*.

It is often said of an actress that she is too great to fail even when a part does not suit her. But this is an utterly fallacious theory. Only *great* actresses *can* fail. A really bad actress always fails and consequently cannot be considered at all. A mediocre or conventional actress is neither very good nor very bad in any rôle, but a great actress, when she fails, fails magnificently, because she plays with such precision and authority that she is worse than a lesser person possibly could be.

Certainly Yvette Guilbert failed magnificently in *Guibour*. I have been told that her infrequent performances in comedy in Paris have been equally unsuccessful. When Guilbert sings a song she is forced by the very nature of her method to make much of little; without setting, frequently without costume, without the aid of other actors, she is obliged in a period of three or four minutes to give her public an atmosphere, several characters, and a miniature drama. Now, taking into con-

sideration the average low rate of intelligence and the almost entire lack of imagination of the ordinary theatre audience, she is compelled to chuck in as much detail as the thing will hold. The result is generally admirable. In a play, however, this method becomes monotonous, tiresome, picayune, fussy, overelaborate. One does not want the lift of an eyelash, a gesture with every line; one does not want emphasis on every word. The great actors employ broader methods. It was here that Madame Guilbert failed, by applying the extremely efficacious technique of her own perfect craft to another craft which calls for another technique.

Geraldine Farrar has been seen and heard in a number of impersonations at the Metropolitan Opera House (she has also enlarged her cinema répertoire), since I wrote my paper about her, Orlanda in *La Reine Fiamette*, Lodoletta, Thais, Suor Angelica, and Zaza, but I can add very little to what I have said. Orlanda, Lodoletta, and, naturally enough, Thais, she has permanently dropped, I think, after a short period of experimentation. In Zaza, however, it seems possible, although it is too early to predict with certainty,

GERALDINE FARRAR AS ZAZA

from a photograph by Geisler and Andrews (1920)

as I am writing these lines a month after her assumption of the part, that she has found a rôle in which she will meet popular satisfaction for some years to come. On the whole, however, I must leave the case as I pleaded it originally, withal it is probably a trifle rosier than I would plead it now. Nevertheless I must state in fairness that Madame Farrar has probably never sung so well before as she is singing this winter (1919–20) and that she retains the admiration of opera-goers in general. It seems apparent to me now that in exploiting herself as a " character " actress she has perhaps made a mistake. Her best work has not been done in operas like *Thais*, *Carmen*, and *Zaza*, but as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, as the Goosegirl in *Königskinder*, and as Rosaura in *Le Donne Curiose*. Usually, indeed, she is charming in what are called " ingenue " rôles. It may therefore be considered unfortunate that these are the rôles in her repertoire to which she is most indifferent. However it must be admitted that it seems impertinent and even stupid to storm and fret about a career which has been so evenly successful. The public must admire Madame Farrar or it would not go to see her, and at the Metropolitan

Opera House it is a recognized fact that she is one of two singers in the company who is always sure of drawing a full house.

IV

We come to Mary Garden. I never can resist the temptation to write about Mary Garden. I never even try to. Other subjects intrigue me for a time, but I usually pass them by in the end and go on to something new, new to me, at least. But I always feel that I have left something unsaid about this singing actress. It is probable that I always will feel this way for Miss Garden in her performances constantly suggests some new idea or awakens some dormant emotion. As a result, although I may write about coleoptera, the influence of cobalt on the human mind, or a history of Persian miniatures, I shall probably always find occasion to insert a few remarks about this incomparable artist.

The paper devoted to her in this book seems to me at present pitifully weak, absurdly inadequate. I have gone farther in "The New Art of the Singer," which you will find in "The Merry-Go-Round" (1918), and in my study of *Carmen* in "The Music of Spain" (1918). This seems a

good place to state, however, that Miss Garden's Carmen was only seen to its best advantage when she appeared with Muratore. The nature of her interpretation of this rôle is such that it depends to a great extent on satisfactory assistance from her fellow singers. Her Carmen is a study of a cold, brutal, mysterious gipsy, who does not seek lovers, they come to her. When, as at some recent performances, the tenors and baritones do not come (it is obvious that some of them might take lessons to advantage in crossing the stage) her interpretation loses a good deal of its intention. I offer this explanation to any one who feels that my enthusiasm for her in this rôle is exaggerated. To fully understand the greatness of Miss Garden's Carmen one must have observed it in fitting surroundings. I hope this environment may soon be provided again.

On the whole I feel that the most enthusiastic of Miss Garden's admirers have so far done the woman scant justice. Most of us are beginning to realize that she is the greatest of living lyric artists, that she has done more to revive the original intention of the Florentines in inventing the opera to recapture the theatre of the Greeks, than any one else. She has made opera, indeed,

sublimated speech. And she is certainly the contemporary queen of lyric sigaldry.

It is said by some who do not stop to think, or who do not know what singing is, that Mary Garden is a great actress but that she cannot sing.[1] These misguided bigots, who try to make it their business to misunderstand anything that approaches perfection, remind me of the incident of Lady Astor and the American sailor. She met the youth just outside the Houses of Parliament and asked him if he would like to go in. "I *would* not," were the words he flung into her astonished face. "My mother told me to avoid women like you." Some day a few of the most intelligent of these sacculi may realize that Mary Garden is probably the greatest living singer. It is, indeed, with her voice, and with her *singing* voice that she does her most consummate acting. Indeed her capacity for colouring her voice to suit the emergencies not only of a phrase but of an entire rôle, might give a hint to future interpreters, were there any capable of taking advantage of such a valuable hint. But, good God,

[1] The fault is really typical of that school of criticism which is always comparing, instead of searching out an artist's intention and judging whether or not he has realized it.

in such matters as phrasing, *portamento, messa di voce,* and other paraphernalia of the singing teacher's laboratory, she is past-mistress, and if any one has any complaints to make about the quality and quantity of tone she used in the second act of *l'Amore dei Tre Re* I feel that he did not listen with unprejudiced ears.

There is, perhaps, nothing that need be added at present to what I have already said of her Sapho, Marguerite, Mélisande,[1] Chrysis, Jean, Louise, and Thais, except that such of these impersonations as still remain in her répertoire are as clean-cut, as finely chiselled as ever; probably each is a little improved on each subsequent occasion on which it is performed. Some day I shall have more to say about her marvellous Monna Vanna. I am sure I would understand her Salome better now. When I first saw her in Richard Strauss's music drama I was still under the spell of Olive Fremstad's impersonation, and was astonished, and perhaps a little indignant at Miss

1 Maurice Maeterlinck broke a promise to Georgette Leblanc of seventeen years' standing to witness a performance of Debussy's lyric drama on January 27, 1920, when, with the new Madame Maeterlinck, he sat in a box, remaining till the final curtain, at the Lexington Theatre in New York. After the fourth act, responding to Miss Garden's urge and the applause of the audience, he rose to bow.

Garden's divagations. But now I know what I did not know so well then, that an interpreter must mould a part to suit his own personality. It is probable that if Mary Garden should vouchsafe us another view of her nervous, unleashed tiger-woman I would be completely bowled over.

It seems necessary to speak of the portraits she has added to her gallery since the fall of 1917. Since then she has been seen in Février's *Gismonda*, Massenet's *Cléopâtre*, and Montemezzi's *l'Amore dei Tre Re*. The first of these is a very bad opera; it is not even one of Sardou's best plays. The part afforded Miss Garden an opportunity for the display of pride, dignity, and authority. Her gowns were very beautiful — I remember particularly the lovely Grecian drapery of the convent scene, which she has since developed into a first-act costume for Fiora; she made a handsome figure of the woman, but the thing itself was pasteboard and will soon be forgotten. The posthumous *Cléopâtre* was nearly as bad, but in the scene in which the queen, disguised as a boy, visits an Egyptian brothel and makes love to another boy, Mary was very startling, and the death scene, in which, after burying the asp in her bosom, she tosses it away with a shudder, sinks to the ground,

MARY GARDEN AS CLÉOPÂTRE

from a photograph by Moffett (1919)

then crawls to Antony's side and expires below his couch, one arm waving futilely in the air in an attempt to touch her lover, was one of her most touching and finest bits of acting. Her pale face, her green eyelids combined to create a sinister makeup. But, on the whole, a dull opera, and not likely to be heard again.

But Fiora! What a triumph! What a volcano! I have never been able to find any pleasure in listening to the music of Montemezzi's *l'Amore dei Tre Re*, although it has a certain pulse, a rhythmic beat, especially in the second act, which gives it a factitious air of being better than it really is. The play, however, is interesting, and subtle enough to furnish material for quibble and discussion not only among critics, but among interpreters themselves. Miss Bori, who originally sang Fiora in New York, was a pathetic flower, torn and twisted by the winds of fate, blown hither and thither without effort or resistance on her part. It was probably a possible interpretation, and it found admirers. Miss Muzio, the next local incumbent of the rôle, fortified with a letter from Sem Benelli, or at least his spoken wishes, found it convenient to alter this impersonation in most particulars, but she was not, is not, very

convincing. Her intentions are undoubtedly good but she is no instrument for the mystic gods to play upon.

But Miss Garden's Fiora burned through the play like a flame. She visualized a strong-minded mediæval woman, torn by the conflicting emotions of pity and love, but once she had abandoned herself to her passion she became a living altar consecrated to the worship of Aphrodite and Eros. Such a hurricane of fiery, tempestuous love has seldom if ever before swept the stage. Miss Garden herself has never equalled this performance, save in Mélisande and Monna Vanna, which would lead one to the conclusion that she is at her best in parts of the middle ages, until one reflects that in early Greek courtesans, in French cocottes of several periods, in American Indians, and Spanish gipsies she is equally atmospheric. Other Fioras have been content to allow the hand of death to smite them without a struggle. Not this one. When Archibaldo attempts to strangle her she tries to escape; her efforts are horrible and pathetic because they are fruitless. And the final clutch of the fingers behind his back leave the most horrible blood-stains of tragic beauty in the memory.

Epilogue

V

What is to become of Mary Garden? What can she do now? What is there left for her to do? Those who complain of some of the dross in her répertoire can scarcely have considered the material available to her. In *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Louise*, and *Salome* she has given much to the best the contemporary lyric stage has to offer. On other occasions she has succeeded in transfiguring indifferent material with her genius. *Monna Vanna* is not a great opera, but she makes it seem so. But where is there anything better? Can she turn to Puccini, whose later operas seem bereft of merit, to Mascagni, to Strauss, to any other of the living opera composers?

Ravel's one opera is not particularly suited to her, but why, I might ask, does not Ravel write something for her? Why not Strawinsky? Why not Leo Ornstein? Why not John Carpenter? The talented composer of *The Birthday of the Infanta* might very well write an opera, in which her genius for vocal experimentation might have still further play.

In the meantime I can make one or two suggestions. I have already begged for Isolde and

Isolde I think we shall get in time. But has it occurred to any one that the Queen in *The Golden Cockerel* is a part absolutely suited to the Garden genius? Not, of course, *The Golden Cockerel* as at present performed, with a double cast of singers and pantomimists but as an opera, in the form in which Rimsky-Korsakow conceived it. And I hope some day that she will attempt Gluck's *Armide*, perhaps one of the Iphigénies, and Donna Anna. Why not? Of all living singers Miss Garden is the only one who could give us the complete fulfilment of Mozart's tragic heroine. Oscar Hammerstein, whose vision was acute, once considered a performance of *Don Giovanni* with Maurice Renaud in the title part, Luisa Tetrazzini as Zerlina, Lina Cavalieri as Elvira, and Mary Garden as Anna. It was never given. But I hope at the next revival of the work at the Opéra-Comique Miss Garden will undertake the part, and I see no reason why the opera should not be added to the already extensive répertoire of the Chicago Opera Company.

Her stride, her lithe carriage, her plastic use of her arms and her body, give Mary Garden a considerable advantage over a sculptor, who can in the course of a lifetime only capture perhaps

ten perfect examples of arrested motion, while in any one performance she makes her body a hundred different works of art. Of course, some of us, fascinated by the mere beauty of the Garden line, more slender now than it was even in her most youthful past, delighted with her irreproachable taste in dress, would rest content to watch her walk across the scene or form exquisite pictures in any part, in any opera. But unless one of the best of the moderns writes a great rôle for her, it would be a great satisfaction to see her in one of the noble classic parts of the past, and that satisfaction, I hope, will be vouchsafed us.

March 18, 1920.

New York.

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